

ENCHANTING

FAIRY TALES





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ENCHANTING
AND
ENCHANTED

FROM THE GERMAN OF HACKLÄNDER.

BY

MRS. A. L. WISTER,

TRANSLATOR OF "THE OLD MAM'SELLE'S SECRET," "GOLD ELSIE," "ONLY
A GIRL," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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FAIRY SPELLS.

THE ELFIN TREE.

WHEN, in winter, the boughs of the trees are bending under their weight of snow, and the rude north wind whistles through the streets, when the days grow shorter, and the evenings longer and longer, the children ask each other, "How many Sundays will there be before Christmas?" And first, there are four, then three, then two, and at last only one, and then another reckoning begins, and the children count up how many times they must go to bed and get up again before Christmas ever comes. This is the way with all children, rich and poor; for even if there is no Christmas-tree for the latter, and though they may receive no rich gifts, they rejoice in the splendour of the brilliant lights which shine through the windows everywhere, and delight in the little gift, be it ever so small, which their poor parents have provided for them. But this evening is a sad one for the poor child who has neither parents nor relatives, but, living upon the charity of strangers, must see beautiful fir trees shining everywhere, and beautiful gifts given, without having any share in either, or sometimes even being allowed to look at them.

At the time when our wonderful story took place there was just such a poor orphan child living in the house of a rich tradesman, who had many children under the care of a bad step-mother, whom he had married soon after the death of his first wife, and who bore him a son, whom she petted and entirely spoiled. Although the father would not allow this bad step-mother to indulge her own son more than his other children, and saw to it strictly that they were all treated equally well, he could not induce her to treat the poor orphan boy, who was called Gustave, with love and gentleness. When he sometimes remonstrated with her upon the subject, she would say: "Well, the little good-for-nothing ought to be content with enough to eat and drink, and a place to sleep in. It is a new idea that beggars' brats must be petted and indulged." Ah! poor Gustave did not deserve that, and never complained when coarser food and clothes were provided for him than for the other children, only it grieved him sorely, and he could not understand why the other children, who were no handsomer nor better than he, should be treated so much more kindly. And particularly on Christmas morning, when the little ones were all showing their beautiful toys and gifts, and when the son of the bad step-mother would maliciously assure him that the Christ-child brought nothing for beggars' children, the poor orphan would be sad indeed, and resolve that if ever the Christ-child came in his way he would entreat him to tell him why he always forgot him.

And now Christmas-eve had come round again, and Gustave learned from the maids and men in the kitchen

that at midnight a silver bell would ring, and the Christ-child would come riding on a little ass to bring the children all the beautiful toys which they would find the next morning upon the tables and chairs. "Then," he thought to himself, "to-night I will listen for the bell, and run to meet the Christ-child and ask him humbly to remember me." And Gustave tossed upon his miserable bed in the attic, and could not sleep for expectation, but heard every stroke of the clock. At last just as it struck twelve, he seemed to hear a gentle noise in the house, something like the ringing of a little bell. He got softly out of bed, and excitement, as well as cold, made his teeth chatter loudly. He slowly went down the stairs and listened attentively, but everything in the house was as quiet as a church; he could not hear the slightest noise. At last he saw a ray of light through the chink of a door which had not been quite closed, and, peeping in, found to his sorrow that he had come too late, for the Christ-child had already ridden away, after covering the table with the most beautiful toys.

At first the poor fellow was about to slip up to his attic again; but he could not resist his curiosity, and slowly opened the door that he might see the toys more distinctly. Oh, dear, what beautiful things were there! The child stood confused and amazed, and looked about him for some time before he could quietly examine anything. On a table in the middle of the room stood a tall hemlock tree covered with wax-lights and beautiful things. On the top of the tree there were two golden flags, which waved in the draught of air that came from the door when the boy opened

it. Upon the table under the tree there were heaps of all kinds of toys. There stood a great dray loaded with chests and bales, and the driver, standing by, was swinging his whip above his head, all so naturally made that one felt convinced that if the whip would only crack the horses would gallop quickly away. And there too stood a beautiful carriage, such as wealthy, distinguished people drive,—it was painted blue and had red wheels,—and sitting in it was a wondrously beautiful little lady dressed in a white silk frock, trimmed with lace, with a myrtle crown and a long veil upon her head, and her little, round face looked so kindly at poor Gustave that he could scarcely take his eyes off her. Beside the carriage was ranged a regiment of wooden soldiers, with great bear-skin caps upon their heads and muskets upon their shoulders, looking sternly and rigidly before them. The drummers went first, holding their drumsticks, all ready to beat bravely at the word of command. On the other side of the table were pretty little houses; yes, a whole town, with churches and bridges, and a large garden besides, with beautiful trees and little fountains, and in the garden finely-dressed people were walking, and huntsmen, with their guns upon their shoulders, were spying diligently around for the hares and deer that were leaping about under the trees.

And now Gustave noticed, directly beneath the hemlock tree, a figure which at first shocked him not a little. It was twice as big as the other figures which stood upon the table around it, and had a misshapen, large, almost square head. Its mouth was even too large and misshapen for its ugly head, and was, be-

sides, wide open, showing a row of sharp, white teeth. Its eyes were red, with a small black pupil in each, which looked fiercely out upon the world. The fellow was dressed in red breeches, little yellow boots, and a hussar's jacket. At his side hung a large sabre, and upon his boots were ugly spurs. But what surprised Gustave most was the length of his queue behind, which almost reached to his feet. This fierce-looking creature was no other than the celebrated Sir Nutcracker, who lends children his sharp teeth, as long as he is in the humour for it, to crack their nuts. The poor child had never had occasion to request the services of this grim gentleman, consequently was in great terror of so fierce a fellow. Although, upon examining him more closely, Gustave soon left him and went to the other side of the table to the little lady in the white silk dress, who smiled at him so kindly, he could not help glancing across sometimes at Nutcracker, and it seemed then as though the little man rolled his red eyes towards him and chattered with his teeth. But the room was so comfortable and warm, and the odour of the hemlock tree was so sweet and strange, that the child's eyes began to close. If he thought of going up to his attic to bed, the little lady looked from her carriage so tenderly that he found it impossible to leave her; so Gustave, after some reflection, seated himself upon a low bench at the table, and, though he resolved firmly not to go to sleep, his head sunk on his breast and his eyes closed involuntarily.

Then suddenly the golden flags waved more proudly upon the hemlock tree, and the needles on the branches rustled loudly; and it seemed to Gustave that the Nut-

cracker raised his head slowly and sharpened his teeth upon the trunk of the tree. Even the rigid wooden soldiers moved their feet restlessly, as though impatient to march; and the boy thought he could distinctly see the whip of the driver move as though about to crack loudly. A moment afterwards all was quiet again, and, half sleeping and half waking, the boy turned to the beautiful lady in the carriage, and if his lips spoke no word, the beating of his heart asked why the Nutcracker looked so angrily from the root of the hemlock tree, and why the soldiers and driver seemed so anxious to come to life. The beautiful lady in the white silk dress turned her head somewhat to one side and whispered so softly that it almost sounded like the rustling of the hemlock needles. "Ah, alas! in the moss under the hemlock tree the evil sorcerer sits hidden, who keeps us all prisoners, so that we cannot move and breathe; and if he were dead—yes, if he were only dead—we could enjoy existence as you do, and go out into the world to meet a better fate than that of being broken and spoiled in the hands of naughty children." At these last words the beautiful little lady seemed to shed a couple of tears, and the Nutcracker could be distinctly heard rattling his sabre and his spurs angrily.

What he thus heard about the sorcerer sounded very strangely to the boy, and he was quite frightened. But suddenly he pictured to himself, as the evil sorcerer, some one who abused and ill treated the little lady just as he was abused by the bad step-mother, and his heart beat so angrily that he woke up suddenly and ran to the hemlock tree to look for the sorcerer, firmly

resolving to twist his neck for him. Then a low cry of joy seemed to break from the people upon the table, and, as he felt through the moss at the foot of the tree with his hands, he thought the little lady in the white silk dress looked towards him and nodded her head kindly. For some time he found nothing suspicious; but at last he drew forth out of the moss a figure scarce two inches high, which had no legs or arms, but a fiery-red head, with small malicious eyes and a mouth that stretched from ear to ear. "Aha!" thought Gustave, "this must be the evil sorcerer," and he took him with him back to his seat and placed him upon the edge of the table; for he had too true a feeling of justice to condemn the little fellow unheard, even though he were the worst sorcerer in the world. He placed him on the table before him with his head upright, that he might ask him seriously why he persecuted with his evil spells the poor lady in the carriage, the brave Sir Nutcracker, and all the company of lofty and lowly degree upon the table, and why he would not set them free. But scarcely had he taken his thumb and finger from the little thing's body when the impudent fellow, as in sheer defiance, toppled upside down and stood stiff upon his red head.

Gustave found such behaviour extremely unbecoming, and saw in it only the insolence of the little fellow, who wished to laugh at and ridicule his questions. He sat him up in the correct position again; but no sooner had he done so than he bobbed back again more briskly than before, and it seemed to the boy as though he waggled his little body to and fro maliciously and spitefully. Gustave was extremely vexed at this

impudence, and, taking him for the third time, said to him: "Listen to me, you evil sorcerer, I advise you to cease your tumbling and grimaces, and tell me freely and frankly, will you disenchant the poor little people here or not?" But, for the third time, he popped upon his head and seemed to jeer at the boy by wagging his ugly, misshapen body in the air.

This was too much. Gustave seized him by the head, and was doubtful for a moment whether to twist his neck, or hand him over to the honourable Sir Nutcracker. At last he decided in favour of the latter course, for he was sorry to destroy anything, even though it were only a sorcerer, who had laughed at and ridiculed him. And Nutcracker seemed to stretch open his mouth wider and his teeth to chatter with desire to grind up the hated enemy; so the boy took the little sorcerer in his hand and stuck him quickly into Nutcracker's mouth. A terrible and exciting moment ensued, and the sight of the brave Nutcracker's energetic and fearful exertions to shut his mouth, which he could not possibly do, almost drew tears from Gustave. The worthy knight's eyes flashed with rage, and his sabre and spurs rattled with unspeakable fury, but in vain; he could not shut his mouth and grind up the sorcerer. Suddenly it occurred to the boy that his heavy pig-tail must hinder greatly the movements of his jaws, and in order to help him to chew up the magician he lifted his queue a little into the air. Then the Nutcracker clapped his jaws together, so that they sounded loudly through the room, and opened his mouth and shut it again, until the sorcerer seemed to be quite dead; so he chewed him

up fine in his jaws with a noise like a coffee-mill grinding coffee.

The boy stood and looked on with amazement, for anything like this he had never in his life seen before. After the Nutcracker had killed the magician, he shouted for joy, took his sabre under his arm, and sprang up into the air. Then he hurried to the carriage in which the little lady sat, and, touching his hat, said: "Fairest Princess, I await your commands." Ah! a most curious and wonderful bustle now began on the table. The driver cracked his whip, and the horses, harnessed to the dray, started off, but the driver called out, "Woa! woa!" to them, and they stood stock-still, only shaking their harness with delight. The drummers before the soldiers beat a short roll, and one of the lieutenants immediately gave the word of command: "Ground arms! Stand at ease!" and the rigid fellows began to move,—one examined his gun, and another, taking off his bear-skin cap, put some question to a third. In front of the regiment the officers stood talking together, and one assured another that, 'pon his honour, the weather was incomparably fine; to which the other replied, wittily and with enthusiasm, that it really was incomparably fine weather. And in the garden everything suddenly began to stir. The trees shook their branches as though moved by the wind, the stags and hares sprang away over the green grass, and the huntsmen followed them with loud shouts and winding of horns, and all the groups of people who had before been standing stiffly about in the garden-path began to move, placed one wooden foot before another, and

walked about briskly under the trees. The boy did not know what to make of all this, and stood there, with clasped hands, staring at these extraordinary things. He was particularly interested in the little lady in the white silk dress, who often looked round at him and now and then nodded at him kindly ; so he stayed by that side of the table where the carriage was.

After Sir Nutcracker had run all around the table and carefully investigated everything, he came again to the carriage-door, and, touching his hat, said : " Most gracious Princess, the spell is broken, and the people impatiently await your permission to go out into the world. Every moment that we delay here is fraught with fresh danger for us ; therefore I entreat you, O Princess ! to give the order to march." Then she nodded carelessly to the Nutcracker and replied : " Most worthy friend, before we leave this place it is only reasonable that I should offer my thanks to this mortal child, who prudently and wisely discovered the sorcerer, pulled him from his hiding-place, and delivered him to you, O noble Nutcracker ! for punishment." At these last words the noble knight scraped his foot, so that his spurs clashed, and he conveyed the Princess's thanks to the boy in the choicest expressions, as well as the gratitude of the little people ; and the Princess drew from her finger a golden ring, with a white stone that sparkled like a dew-drop, and handed it to Gustave.

The child was shocked to find that the beautiful little lady, as well as the soldiers and the Nutcracker, was about to leave him, and was terribly afraid of the

beating that he would receive the next morning when his cross mistress discovered that the things were gone, for he thought every one who looked at him must see that he had set them all at liberty,—so he made one or two useless attempts to induce them to remain. And when the little lady shook her head sadly, and his Highness, Sir Nutcracker, declared upon his honour that any further delay would be useless, and perhaps dangerous, he at once resolved to accompany the little people, with which determination the Princess seemed much more pleased than Sir Nutcracker. The latter, indeed, made several objections to the plan; but as the little lady accorded her full and free consent to it, the old fellow had to shut his great mouth and content himself with casting a couple of unfriendly glances at the boy.

And then Nutcracker announced to all the people that the Princess had appointed him Regent of her future realm, and that every one must take great pains to obey his orders strictly. The command to start was given, and the lieutenants, with their soldiers, marched off the table to the tap of the drums as though an even road had been made from the table to the floor. And many other wonders occurred, for all the covers sprang up from the boxes and caskets upon the table, and the little figures inside of them all walked bravely off. Here was a company of tradespeople with the implements of their trades, and here a whole dramatic company with the director at their head, and the principal performers walking arm in arm, followed by the comic characters, and so on down to the stage-manager and lamp-lighter. Then a

regiment of cuirassiers, as well as another regiment of dragoons, arose and followed the train. The driver cracked his whip, and the horses started off,--while behind the heavily-packed dray came the promenaders from the garden, followed by the huntsmen and dogs, accompanied by the merrily-bounding deer and roes. Nutcracker, who did not think it becoming for the regent of the kingdom to travel on foot, called up a little wooden camel and got upon his back, and the poor beast, with his heavy burden, walked patiently by the side of the carriage in which the little lady sat. Gustave walked on the other side, and, in spite of all the wonders he had seen this night, he was surprised anew when he saw how correctly and quietly the whole train marched down the steps of the house, and how the front door, which had opened of itself, closed again in the same manner as soon as the whole company were in the street. In the room above, the night-lamp burnt dimly and gloomily, there was a mournful rustling in the boughs of the hemlock, and the gilded nuts and sugar-plums twisted and sighed. And out of the moss at the foot of the tree there suddenly arose a second sorcerer, who stood straight upon his head with rage and fury, and, gnashing his teeth, cried out to the departing crowd "Only wait until to-morrow, you pack of vagabonds, just wait until to-morrow!"

In the street without, the most beautiful, clear night was reigning, and, although the moon set at midnight, the stars sparkled so brightly that every path and road were seen distinctly by their light. The house where Gustave had lived until now was near the end of the town, so that the little people soon reached the coun-

try, where were large forests and spacious commons. The military marched in close squadrons, and were on their guard against any night-surprise. And they were right, for here and there were seen huge monsters—rats, cats, and dogs—who sprang among the little people, gnashing their teeth. Ah, one brave little lieutenant lost his life on this night in an attempt to distinguish himself,—he drew his sabre and rushed upon a young cat who was glaring at him with its red, fiery eyes. Vain was his heroic courage and the strength of his youthful arm! The monster laid him low with one blow of its huge paw, and the dying lieutenant cried with his latest breath, “Long live the Princess and Regent Nutcracker!”

After this sad but not irreparable loss,—for it was only a breveted lieutenant,—the little people marched quietly on, and soon reached a heath, where Regent Nutcracker held a consultation with the grandees of the realm as to what was to be done for the night, and as to a place of refuge where wicked men should not find them at daybreak and take them captive again. Although it was mid-winter, Gustave, who was walking quickly along by the side of the carriage, did not feel at all cold, but was as warm and comfortable as on a clear May-day, especially when he looked into the black eyes of the friendly little lady. He took the liveliest interest in the council now holding, for he was greatly troubled by the thought that he might be followed and carried back on the morrow. After much discussion, the huntsmen maintained that in just such places as this in which they found themselves, huge beasts, called foxes, lived, who built under ground

the most convenient and beautiful dwellings ever seen. "Yes," said they, "deep in the earth are the caves of these beasts, built with large antechambers, and all around them are wide passages which lead in different directions up to the surface of the ground. If we could only vanquish one of these monsters we should have the handsomest dwelling in the world. But," added the huntsmen and the brave officers, "much heroic blood will flow." What was to be done? Although the Princess would not hear at first of her subjects losing their lives in such an unequal contest, a place of refuge for the night was absolutely necessary, and she yielded at last to the prayers of Nutcracker and her assembled nobles, and the Regent chose out the bravest of the troops to reconnoitre the heath, and find a fox's cave.

The boy, who had heard much of foxes, and knew that they were ugly, sly beasts who stole fowls at night, and sometimes even fell upon the hares and rabbits in the woods, was appointed by the Regent to lead the troops about the heath. Nutcracker himself remained with the carriage, in order, as he said, to protect the Princess, and encouraged the departing officers with the prospect of the brilliant promotion and the glittering stars of a new order which they were about to gain.

Gustave, who felt the importance of his office, had no sooner lost sight of the beautiful little lady than he suggested to the assembled host under his command that it would be much better if he should carry them all, officers and men, in his hands, as they could then make far greater progress.

This suggestion was adopted, and they soon came to a corner of the forest where the boy saw a great many little round openings in the ground, which the hunters, to whom he showed them, declared were the holes of foxes. Gustave immediately placed his whole army upon the ground. But when they began to put themselves in position it was found that many of the officers were missing. These brave fellows had been seized with a panic at sight of the terrible caves, and had wandered away, Heaven knows where. When the drummers beat to arms, some were found hidden away in the boy's pockets. But they declared upon their honour that they had slipped down there unwittingly.

One of the holes was immediately surrounded on all sides, and the commander of the forces called for volunteers who would venture as an advanced guard into the monster's dwelling. Twenty bearded warriors were soon ready,—old veterans with huge bear-skin caps,—who marched into the little openings, two by two, with fixed bayonets, and moved slowly onwards. The boy seized a stout stick, which he found upon the ground, and placed himself before the largest of the holes, in order to greet the fox, if he should appear, with a good blow upon the nose. The whole army stood around the openings, eager and expectant. As it was possible that the beast was not at home, but seeking for prey in the open fields, the precaution was taken of placing a line of pickets in the rear of the army, to guard against surprise, and the wisdom of this military measure was soon made manifest. For no sooner had the brave veterans disappeared in the

bowels of the earth than the outside posts rushed in to the next in line, and these others upon those in front of them, announcing with loud shouts that a horrible monster was approaching in great haste. - Oh, heavens! how many sighs and prayers burst from the lips of these valiant officers and men, for the dreaded creature was indeed coming! It grieves me to confess that at this moment most of the corps commanders and officers lost their heads. They issued all sorts of contradictory commands, and ordered the poor soldiers hither and thither, who, not knowing what was best to be done, wisely followed their natural impulses and ran away. The huntsmen, however, did not imitate this inglorious example; but, hiding behind large blades of grass and pebbles, prepared to receive the monster with well-aimed bullets. Yes, it was old Sir Reynard himself who was hurrying home. On he came in full career; but whether he perceived that matters around his dwelling were not all right I cannot say—at any rate, he slackened his pace and looked cautiously about. The boy stood very near the entrance of the hole, half concealed by a tree, with his club tight in his hand, and, as he was braver than Nutcracker's whole army put together, he did not flinch, but let the fox get quite near, and then, just as the old fellow was about to stick his nose into the opening, he gave him such a blow upon his head that Reynard turned round and ran like a shot away over the fields. Unfortunately he took the direction in which the greater part of the army had gone just before, and innumerable cries of anguish soon informed the boy that the fox had reached the flying host. But,

as Reynard was intent only upon escape, he did not stop to do the little people any harm, but, only running over some battalions of infantry and a few squadrons of dragoons, he quickly vanished in the dark night.

As all danger was now at an end, officers and soldiers went back quickly to the fox's hole, and as in the meantime the brave volunteers had returned from exploring it, and reported that it was quite empty and most suitably provided with apartments and passages, a message to this effect was soon dispatched to Regent Nutcracker, who appeared upon his camel with a mounted escort. The Princess followed him in her carriage, as well as the whole train, and when they had all entered the hole they fell into one another's arms with mutual congratulations at having obtained so splendid a capital city.

The Regent summoned the volunteers into his presence, and, in view of the extraordinary service which they had this night rendered the State, he condescended to address to them some words of commendation, while he appointed all the officers, even those who had run away, knights of a newly-founded order, the gold crosses of which were, of course, distributed by the noble Nutcracker, who took care to provide himself with one also.

The boy, who had certainly contributed the largest share towards the happy termination of the dangers of the night, was greatly surprised to receive no words of praise from Regent Nutcracker, but to be commanded by him to lay aside his club,—a command which pained him not a little. He was somewhat

comforted, however, on receiving a kindly nod from the little lady, although he imagined that he could perceive that her face was not as cheerful as before; nay, he even thought her eyes filled with tears, and that she sighed deeply. The Regent bustled down from his camel and commanded the carriers, who were standing by their laden carts, to proceed directly into the cave with their trunks and boxes, while the tradespeople would fit up the interior for the reception of the Princess. The little men worked with such diligence and rapidity that it was really a pleasure to hear them hammering and sawing. The soldiers assisted to purify and level the many passages into the cave. Sentinels were posted at stated distances along these passages; and when all these precautions were taken the Regent commanded all to enter their new dwelling, and, once more mounting his camel, rode before the Princess's carriage.

The poor boy, who beheld all these arrangements, saw clearly that he would have to remain behind, so he approached the carriage and said mournfully to the pretty little lady, "Ah, fairest Princess, what will become of me? Will you leave me here alone upon the ground in the dark night, which will kill me with cold when you have vanished from my eyes—you whose kindly look alone has warmed and cheered me?"

At these words the Regent turned around upon his camel and said in rather a haughty manner, "We thank you, in the name of the kingdom, for the services you have rendered. You have done your duty, and we shall bear you in remembrance as long as we live."

The boy, who did not even look at the Regent, noticed that at these words the face of the little lady grew sadder than before, and that large tears were really rolling down her cheeks. She stretched out to him her little white hand and said softly, "Ah, dear friend, I shall surely see you again." Whereupon the noble Nutcracker motioned to move on, the horses started, and the carriage vanished like lightning into the interior of the cave. The soldiers followed, first the infantry, then the cavalry, and, last of all, the huntsmen, with the deer and hares, who did not seem at all afraid, and soon all had disappeared under ground. For awhile the rattling of the vehicles could be heard, and the measured tread of the soldiery; but this grew fainter and more distant, and at last all was quiet and still.

The boy looked around him with amazement, and noticed for the first time, as he gazed over the desolate heath, how piercingly cold was the keen morning wind. What should he do? Although all the occurrences of the past night were so wonderful that they seemed to him like a beautiful dream, he was too well convinced of their reality not to fear bitter ill-treatment, on his return home, from his cruel mistress and her children, who would most probably regard him as a thief that had stolen all these things and hidden them away.

And, alas! his forebodings were but too well founded, for scarcely had the day dawned when the cruel mistress of the house arose and went up to the attic, where poor Gustave usually slept, to waken him that he might fetch the water and make the fires. She was not a

little surprised to find his bed empty. "Aha!" thought she, "for once he has minded his duty, and has probably gone to the spring to wash himself." So she went down stairs again and looked out into the yard, but no boy was to be seen or heard there. She waited for him a little while, and then, shaking her head, she went and got a stick with which to beat him as soon as he should appear. But as he did not come she went into the room, where the Christmas-tree was and all the toys, to make the fire there herself. How shall I describe her fright when, upon entering, she found not a trace of the beautiful toys which she herself had yesterday bought and placed there? At first she thought that her eyes deceived her, and ran to the windows and tore open the curtains. But this did not help her—everything had vanished.

So she ran and awakened her husband, who hurriedly dressed himself and went into the room, where, however, he found nothing more than his wife had found. And the children, too, aroused by the noise, ran after their parents, and, although they were much pleased at sight of the great hemlock tree, they began to cry and bawl loudly, when their mamma told them of the beautiful toys which Kriss Kringle had brought them, and which had all disappeared.

In her first fright the woman had forgotten that poor Gustave was not yet at home; but she suddenly remembered him, and cried out that he had stolen the toys and made off with them. Her husband, too, when he heard that the boy was gone, thought her suspicions well founded, and the children screamed and

howled, declaring that Gustave was just the boy to do such a thing.

Preparations were immediately made to follow and bring him back, and the maids and men-servants were sent out into the town to search for him, while the father himself got ready to assist them. The children, weary of crying and lamenting, were examining the hemlock tree, and the moss at its foot, when one of them showed to the others a very queer little figure, that he had found. It had no arms nor legs, but a red face, like a man's, a very wide mouth and small, green eyes. The children looked at it, and, placing it upon the table, were much amused to see how it always stood upon its head and waggled the stump of its body in the air. But when the father saw that of all the Christmas gifts nothing was left but this one juggler, he was so angry that he took him in his hand and was going to crush him; but the children begged so earnestly that he would not harm the poor fellow that he did not break him, but carelessly slipped him into his pocket. Then he took his hat and stick and hurried out of the house to look for the runaway boy.

In the mean time the day had grown bright, so that all objects were easily distinguished. A few steps from the house he saw something red upon the ground. He picked it up and found with astonishment that it was one of the officers of the wooden soldiers, with his head all cracked on one side. "Aha!" thought he, "I am on the right track here," and unfortunately some unseen power seemed to direct his steps, for he followed exactly the road taken by the little people on the pre-

vious night, and soon reached the common where he found the poor boy who had fallen asleep before the fox's hole.

He shook him roughly, and poor Gustave was frightened enough. He fell upon his knees and prayed for mercy, but his prayers were of no avail; his master seized the stick with which the boy had chased away the fox and thrashed him soundly, calling out to him to confess where he had hidden all the beautiful toys. In vain the boy declared that he had not carried them off (and he spoke the truth, for they had gone of themselves). The man called him a wicked thief, and, seizing him by the collar, dragged him home, where his mistress repeated the punishment and then locked him in a dark cellar, bidding him stay there until he should confess what had become of all the lovely toys.

When their father was composed again, the children asked him to give them the juggler that he had put into his pocket, but he searched for it in vain; he could not find what they wanted. As he thought he must have dropped it where he had found the boy, he sent the children thither to look for the ugly little fellow. After awhile they returned without having found him, but bringing with them a quantity of wooden soldiers, which they said they had found lying on the ground just outside of the many openings to the fox's cave. The cruel mistress was now convinced that the boy had stolen all the rest of the toys and taken them with him, and with blows and abuse she commanded him instantly to confess. The cellar where poor Gustave was imprisoned was terribly cold and dark.

Although he would not have cared if they had found and brought back Regent Nutcracker and all the soldiery and tradesfolk, he could not help weeping bitterly at the idea of their finding the poor little lady and bringing her back also, without that kindly smile upon her face which had beamed upon him when she came to life, and at the thought that the naughty children of the house would throw her about, break her lovely head perhaps, and soil the splendid white silk dress. But at last a way out of his difficulties occurred to him. He confessed to his cruel mistress that he knew where the toys were, and that he would bring them back if she would let him go alone for them, but declared that if she would not, he would sooner be beaten to death than tell another word about them. He hoped that he might be able to enlarge one of the passages to the fox's hole, so that he could creep in and capture Nutcracker and the rest of the little people. But he resolved firmly never to bring back the little white lady, but rather to leave her forever in her palace under ground than give her up to wicked people.

When the mistress saw that she could do nothing with him, she let the poor boy have his way, and he went out upon the heath with a little spade to begin his work there.

But how can I describe his astonishment and fright when he saw standing beside the fox's hole a huntsman with two or three little dogs, that he was encouraging to creep into the various openings? The huntsman, quite an old man, had a kind, honest face, and bade the boy good-morning; whereupon the latter

seized him by the hand and entreated him not to let the dogs get into the cave. The huntsman replied with a smile that he could not grant his request, for there was a large fox in this den, that had done a great deal of damage already, and that had eluded every effort made to capture him. The old man spoke so kindly, and inspired the boy with so much confidence, that he told him in as few words as possible the strange occurrences of the past night. The huntsman listened and was not a little affected when the boy, in his simplicity, told him how he had wanted to meet the holy Christ-child in the night that he might beg him to bring him some little gift. To be sure he shook his head at the account of the animated toys, but the boy assured him so earnestly that he was telling the truth that the old man did not know what to think, and, moved by the child's entreaties, turned to his dogs to call them off from the fox-hole.

But it was too late; they had already disappeared in the openings and were heard growling and barking inside.

"Ah!" cried the boy, "now all, all is lost! they will bite the poor beautiful little lady in the white silk dress to death—that poor dear little lady who gave me her hand so kindly, and who was so afraid of being soiled by the children's hands, will now be torn to pieces by the dogs!"

The old man, moved by the child's distress, took a little silver whistle from his girdle, and, after calling on the dogs loudly by name, he whistled three times to hurry them back to him from the hole. Then the noise and barking in the fox-hole grew louder, and

you could hear that the dogs were shaking something before them. Still they came nearer and nearer to the surface until one of them crept out of the opening, dragging a figure which Gustave recognized, to his great astonishment, as the brave and noble Nutcracker, whose misshapen limbs and thick head lay stark and stiff upon the ground. Gustave seized him and showed him to the huntsman. Ah! no trace of life could be discovered in him. His queue behind stood out uncommonly stiff; his jaws were tight set, and when the boy tried to open them he found that the joint was broken and useless.

Unkind as the Regent had been to him, poor Gustave would not have grudged a tear to his untimely fate if it had not suddenly occurred to him that the shameless Nutcracker had forsaken the poor Princess, and probably left her to die. One dog after another crept out, bringing quantities of the vanished toys. One had scraped together a whole heap of soldiers, and the poor fellows lay there stiff and motionless, with their guns upon their shoulders and their bear-skin caps upon their heads. Another dog had a horse by the neck, and dragged him out, bringing with him the whole team, dray, driver, and all. A third hauled out a quantity of harmless promenaders; in short, the dogs brought out in time all the toys, and the boy was every moment fearful that the poor little lady would appear hacked and torn like all the other things. But she did not come, and the last dog appeared at one of the openings. Gustave hardly dared to look, so fearful was he of beholding the poor Princess; but instead, the dog had in his mouth something which the boy

hastily picked up, for it looked just like the malicious little fellow who had stood so defiantly on his head before him. "Ah!" thought Gustave to himself, "this is the evil sorcerer,—it is his fault that they found me here, and that all these poor creatures have grown stiff and stark again." And, in a sudden fit of anger, he tore off the sorcerer's red head and threw him far away. Then it seemed as though all the figures which lay dead upon the ground twitched and stirred a little; yes, the noble Nutcracker made one vain attempt to drop his lower jaw, but the spark of life was extinct,—they all lay there cold and dead.

The boy gathered together all the toys and wrapped them in a cloth that he had brought with him. The huntsman stopped up all the openings to the fox-hole, and made a curious mark upon it with his hunting-knife, which would prevent, he said, any animal from ever creeping in there again, "in order," he added, smiling, "that your poor little Princess may not be disturbed in her sleep."

The sympathy which the boy had shown for the lifeless figures pleased the old man, and the frank, open bearing of the lad attracted him greatly, so he went into town with him to the merchant's house, where the cruel mistress, at sight of the spoiled playthings, attempted again to beat and abuse Gustave. But the huntsman reproved her roughly for her violence, which made her very angry, and she asked why he interfered with matters which did not concern him. However, when the huntsman announced that he was the Keeper of the neighbouring forests, and wished to take the boy with him, that he might make a skilful hunts-

man of him, the bad woman grew more amiable, and, as she was sure that she could not get rid of the boy more easily, she talked it over with her husband, and both gave their consent, to Gustave's great joy, for he had already grown fond of the old huntsman.

They immediately started off, and when they came to the fox-hole the boy stood still for a moment, folded his hands, and gazed sadly at the hillock, as one would contemplate a grave. Ah! for him it was indeed a grave, for there lay the beautiful little lady in her white silk dress, with her pleasant little face, and perhaps she was cold and dead, like the other toys; but perhaps she was only asleep and dreaming. The old huntsman took the boy by the hand, and they both strode sturdily on towards the forest. On the way Gustave had to tell again the story of the previous night, and the old man, who had at first scarcely credited what the boy told him of the moving toys, shook his head thoughtfully and said: "My child, you have a nature sensitive to things that would never stir the imagination of a common man, therefore the forest will be an open book for you, and you will learn and understand much from the rustle of the leaves, the odour of the violet, the ripple of the mountain-brook, and from a thousand other things. Oh, the forest is so fair, so sacredly fair!"

Thus talking, they arrived, as the sun began to descend, at the Keeper's cottage, which stood upon an eminence in the middle of the forest. Although winter had robbed the poor trees of their brightest attire, and although they stood sadly with their naked boughs trembling with cold, the boy thought

it far more grand and glorious here than among the gloomy houses of the town. Here, in the forest, the ground was covered with white snow, from which only little black stalks and moss peeped curiously forth, begging Brother Wind to brush the snow from their stems. The boughs of the large trees, particularly the hemlocks, were heavy with snow, and hung low down; and yet one could look beneath them far into the depths of the wood. How merrily the roes sprang about! And sometimes a strong, stately stag would stand still for a moment, listening to the approaching footsteps, and then, with a couple of bounds, vanish into the thicket.

The sun set slowly, and threw its red, glowing beams deep into the wood, so that one side of the trees looked golden. A fine, blue mist arose from the valleys which grew grayer and darker, and, when the man and boy were near the forest-house, it had become dark as midnight, and through the gloom shone the light of a lamp like a guiding star. This the huntsman pointed out to Gustave, and told him that where that shone his home would be. As they approached it, some great dogs began to bark loudly, and sprang joyfully towards the new-comers. An old woman, the huntsman's sister, opened the door, and, when her brother told her the boy's story, and how he had taken him from a cruel mistress, she stroked the lad's hair kindly and gave him a cordial welcome. Ah! poor Gustave had never passed so happy and comfortable an evening, as this in the forester's cottage. He could sit by the bright blazing fire, and, instead of the harsh words that he had been used to, the huntsman listened kindly

to his childish questions and talked with him, and even the great dogs came and laid their heads upon his knee and looked confidingly at him with their large, shining eyes.

When it was time to retire, he was not sent, as in the merchant's house, to a miserable sack of straw under the roof, but the forester's sister made him a nice bed in a pretty little room, where he could pass the night, and wished him a good-night too, which had never happened to him in his life before, so he went quietly and gently to sleep.

Never had he slept so well in his life ; he dreamed of all kinds of lovely things, and once in his dreams Regent Nutcracker appeared to him, and, grinning at him, showed his teeth and said, laughing scornfully, "Do you see, do you see,—to be sure we are broken and spoiled by naughty children ; but the gracious Princess reposes far under the ground, and you will never see her again,—ha ! ha ! ha !" This made the boy very sad, and he felt the tears rolling down his cheeks in his sleep ; but then the Nutcracker vanished suddenly again, and he saw the little lady lying back upon the silken cushions of her carriage, leaning her head upon her hand and sleeping quietly. The head of the coachman upon the box was bent forward upon his breast, and the horses stood still with closed eyes.

But the winter morning's kindly sun scared away these varied dreams from the boy's couch, and he awakened gay and happy. The huntsman soon called him and took him into the forest, where he showed him how the little trees were growing out of the ground, and how the various animals left their foot-

prints in the snow,—told him that there a noble stag had passed, that these were the footprints of a roe, and that here Master Reynard had scampered past, after killing a cock or a young hare. And although the boy listened attentively to all that the old man told him, he was most interested in observing the tracks of the fox, for he always remembered the pretty little lady, and thought how he might find her again if the old fox should ever return to his dwelling and manage to get in.

The old huntsman's affection for the boy continued to increase,—he taught him something new every day, and nothing pleased Gustave more than to wander through the forest. But when the spring came, and with the disappearance of frost and snow the earth grew green and young, he did indeed delight in his forest life. For the first time he saw how the buds of the trees swelled larger and larger, until some warm wind would kiss them open and the tender little leaves peeped out, and, when free from their prison, began to grow lustily, and soon shaded the delicate, mossy covering of the ground. He could have watched for hours the young trees which, springing from the earth, became stronger and taller from day to day. And just so he grew himself, and became, under the kind care of the huntsman, and in the pure air of the forest, big and strong. Weeks and months passed, and several Christmas-days had come and gone, and upon these days Gustave thought more steadily and earnestly, than at any other time, of the night when he wandered forth with the toys. Sometimes he visited the merchant's house in the town, and

upon the way always looked for the fox-hole in which the beautiful little lady was sleeping; but distinctly as he remembered all about it, he searched in vain for the place where the brave Regent Nutcracker had dismounted from his camel and disappeared with his train within the hillock. He did not much like to visit the town, for they did not seem very glad to see him in the merchant's house, and he preferred to stay in his forest-home with his dogs, who loved him dearly. The only relic of former times which he possessed was the little ring which the Princess had given him, and which he prized highly. He wore it attached to a riband around his neck.

Thus Gustave got to be sixteen years old, and became a skilful huntsman. As his adopted father, the forester, grew aged and infirm, he remained much at home, and Gustave went about the forest alone, accompanied by his dogs, with his trusty gun upon his shoulder and his sharp, shining hunting-knife by his side.

One day he was sauntering about under the trees, and, as was often the case, with no thoughts of entrapping game—he let the stags and roes, unmolested, cross his path,—walked slowly along, sunk in a reverie, in which the little lady in the white silk dress played a principal part. He went on until he ascended an eminence where the trees were not so thick, and whence he could look abroad and survey the country all around. There, under one of the stoutest oaks, the youth saw an old man sitting with several pieces of snow-white hemlock and linden-wood by his side, from which he was carving all sorts of

figures and articles with his knife. He had made spoons and forks, animals, and even human figures, all fashioned as delicately and naturally as possible. The young huntsman approached, and bidding the old man a friendly good-morning, which was kindly returned, he entered into conversation with him.

"Ah!" said Gustave, "you are carving beautiful things there, and they will bring a good price in the town."

"Yes," replied the old man, "I work here in the open air, with glorious nature all around me, for this is the finest and cheapest work-shop that can be had; and my living is no great expense to me, for the brook ripples past me down the hill, murmuring, as its goes, 'Come, old fellow, drink me.' And then the strawberries and blackberries nod to me from the bushes, and invite me to dine; and when night comes I draw my cloak over my head, lie down upon the moss and sleep, commending myself to God."

"But," rejoined the youth, "is your artistic labour so unprofitable that you are forced to lead such a life?"

"Ah! my dear huntsman," said the wood-carver, "there are so many people who work as artistically, as you call it, and even more so, that it is hard to make anything by my labour. But, if I should be lucky enough to find, for example, some of the wood of the Elfin Tree, I could earn something indeed, only this tree is so very rare, and those who find it do not know how to use it."

"What!" asked the huntsman, "the Elfin Tree? The name is an odd one, and, although I know all

the trees and shrubs in the forest, I have never heard of it."

"I can readily believe that," laughed the old man. "People do not usually prate about everything as stupidly as I do. But your face is so honest and innocent that I seemed to be speaking to the open sky, and the words escaped me I know not how,—forget them."

But at the mention of this wonderful tree, a thrill shot through the young huntsman's soul and awakened strange desires and thoughts there, which he could not understand. He was so desirous to know something more of the Elfin Tree that he did not cease to question the old man until the latter said, laughing, "Well, well, you are a curious fellow, but as you look so honest and open, and do not belong to my trade, I will tell you all that I know of the Elfin Tree,—only you must promise," added the wood-carver, laughing, "that if you should ever be fortunate enough to find such a tree (which is not impossible, for huntsmen tramping around through night and mist, see and hear all kinds of things), you will let me have some of the wood."

After Gustave had given the wood-carver this promise, the latter took a fresh piece of wood, and, as he began carving a spoon out of it, gave the young huntsman the following account :

"You know well that, besides the human race, there live a great number of other creatures upon and under the earth, who look like human beings, although they are a great deal smaller and weaker in body. But in spirit they are far more powerful than we, and perform much which we mortals would gladly imitate, but

which our coarse physical nature renders impossible. To these beings belong, to begin with the meanest, the Brownies, a spiteful race," he added, in a low tone, looking carefully around him, "impudent, vulgar creatures, who do all the harm they can to men and animals. These Brownies are called Root-men, for they look like black radishes split in two below, and have green hair that grows out like leaves. After them come the Kobolds,—crooked, dumpy fellows,—better than the others, however, for, although they are bad and malicious, it sometimes happens that they take a fancy to some mortal and assist him from time to time. These are followed by the Dwarfs, an honest, brave race, but very capricious, who often worry both men and beasts for very wantonness. But the best, noblest, and most beautiful class of these beings are the Elves, in whose hearts there is neither caprice nor treachery, but who hover around the fragrant herbs and flowers of the forest in the night, and refresh the soul of the mortal, who is fortunate enough to hear them, with their wondrous and bewitching songs. They hold themselves aloof from but do not fear the Dwarfs and Kobolds, whose greater brute force is no match for the powerful magic art of the Elves. Notwithstanding that the Elves are more beautiful and better than mortals, it frequently happens that an Elfin maiden becomes enamoured of a mortal man and reveals herself to him on summer nights to jest and play with him. But this cannot last long, for either the mortal faithlessly forsakes the poor Elf, or she must leave him, and endure the cruel punishment awarded to those who fall in love with mortals. She is changed for a hundred years into a

tree, and thus must constantly witness the merry sports of her sisters, who, in stormy weather, can slip into their palaces of crystal, while she remains outside, her tender limbs, which are only fitted for clear moonlight and warm summer air, exposed to biting winds and frosts. These trees grow in the most unfrequented paths, or in deep abysses, and there is a magic circle drawn around them which almost always causes men involuntarily to avoid their neighbourhood, and besides the Elfin Tree looks like a common hemlock, so that one might pass it a hundred times without noticing it. But whoever is, by any chance, fortunate enough to find such a tree, may consider himself born under a lucky star indeed, for see, my young huntsman, I labour hard enough to carve out these little matters from this wood, but whoever gets a piece of the Elfin Tree has only to frame the wish and in one moment he can complete whatever figure he will, be it man or beast, and the work is artistic indeed. And, what is more," he added in a whisper, "the figures carved out of this wood can come to life on Christmas-eve, if only an evil spell resting upon them is removed, and then whoever understands questioning them can discover whatever he wishes,—they will tell, for example, where gold is to be found, where hidden treasure is buried, and such like."

The young huntsman had listened attentively to this narrative, and it may readily be imagined that he remembered the beautiful little white lady,—as well as Sir Nutcracker,—and all the little assemblage, and he thought it not improbable that they might all have been made out of the wood of the Elfin Tree which

some one had found without knowing it. He hesitated for awhile whether he should make known his strange adventure to the old wood-carver, but at last determined to give him the history of that far-off Christmas night, for it seemed to be his duty to do so when the old man had reposed such confidence in him, in telling him all about the Elfin Tree.

But how shall I describe the old man's astonishment when Gustave told him all,—how he had killed the evil sorcerer, and how the whole company had left the house to go out into the world ; how he had accompanied them and had helped them to chase away the fox, in whose hole the whole assemblage had disappeared ! In short, he told him everything most minutely, and at last expressed his conviction that the little lady in the white silk dress was still asleep under ground, and might yet be released. When he had finished, the old man sprang up, shouting for joy, and embraced the young huntsman, while he assured him that he was one of Fortune's favourites, and must at least come to be a great lord in the land.

After he had given vent to his joy for awhile, he sat down quietly beside Gustave, leaned his head upon his hand, and becoming more serious said, "Alas ! alas ! old fool that I am, I forgot that we shall never be able to bring out the little lady from the earth and disenchant her, for to do this we need another Elfin Tree, which I am afraid neither of us can ever find."

These words came like a thunder-clap to poor Gustave, who already saw in imagination the little Princess coming forth from the ground, and growing larger and larger, and, before he knew it, he

had taken her in his arms and kissed her charming rosy lips—all in imagination, you see. But his dreams were all dispelled, and he only half listened while the old man told how a number of cones from the Elfin Tree must be planted upon the spot of ground beneath which the little lady was sleeping.

“The first midnight after they are planted,” he said, “there spring from them little trees which grow no larger above ground, but whose roots dive deep into the earth and thrust and stretch themselves out far on every side. Thus they would entirely surround with their net-work the couch where the little lady sleeps, and the tree would then pour out all the power and force, which it might have used in growing to be a lofty, strong tree, upon the little Princess, whom it would thus reanimate, and she would grow taller and lovelier, until she issued from her prison-house of mortal size and blooming in the rarest beauty. Most certainly,” the old man added, “you would then be the happiest of men, for the maiden would combine with the beauty of an Elf, the constancy and wisdom of the Elfin race. The ring which she gave you, and which you have kept so faithfully, has alone protected her, and prevented her from losing her life with Regent Nutcracker and the other figures, and this ring it is which will bind her to you all her life long.”

In the mean while the sun had set and it began to be very dark night. So the huntsman arose, and bidding the old man good-night, said that his foster-parents were waiting for him at home, and would be anxious if he stayed so late in the forest. Then they agreed to

meet at the same time and upon the same spot three days afterwards to consult how they might try to find the Elfin Tree. The old man was more sanguine than Gustave and sought to inspire him with hope. But the latter shook his head mournfully, and said, as he departed, "Ah, I must wander sadly through the forest all my life long, and shall never again see the lovely little lady whom I love so truly and deeply."

Thus they separated, and the huntsman, who had not remembered how great was the distance from home, now saw that he had so far to go that it would be very late before he could reach it. It was the first time that he had been alone in the woods so late at night, and although he had no fear of robbers or any such thing, still he had on his way home to pass through a small but deep glen, which was regarded with suspicion as not all right by the country people. They maintained that the Dwarfs held their nightly meetings there, and ill treated any mortal who saw them at such times. The huntsman thought of these stories as he strode on through the forest. But he seized his gun firmly, remembered the little lady, and was not afraid. When he had walked some distance, the moon rose slowly upon his path and glittered mildly through the green boughs before him. She shone into his face, so that whether he would or not he had to gaze upon her full orb. Thus he gradually approached the glen which the Dwarfs frequented, and soon saw it lying dark before him. He entered it boldly without fear, and had nearly passed through it when he heard the noise of an axe upon the hills which bordered his path upon one side. Involuntarily he stayed

his footsteps and thought to himself that it was strange that any one should be cutting wood here so late at night. And then a suspicion entered his mind that it might be thieves, who were using the silence of night to rob his adopted father, so he immediately turned towards the side whence the sound proceeded and began to ascend the hill. But when he had reached the spot where he thought he should find the trespasser, he heard the sound of the axe far beyond him. Without stopping to think, he followed the noise, and, after he had climbed up and down several hills, he became convinced that the sound was much nearer than before; but just when he thought that he could not possibly be more than several steps from it, it suddenly ceased and a cry was heard very much like the violent weeping of a child. The huntsman quickly hurried towards this new sound, and soon stepped out upon a little open space and stood chained to the spot with wonder at what he saw.

In the midst of this space was to be seen the stump of a tolerably large hemlock, the trunk and branches of which lay cut off upon the ground; but beside the stump stood a Dwarf scarcely two feet high, who held a little axe in his hand, with which he had, as it seemed, just cut down the hemlock. At first the huntsman was not a little amazed to see the Dwarf jumping wildly around the stump like mad while he uttered the above-mentioned cries. But, upon a nearer approach, he found to his astonishment that the Dwarf's beard, which was almost as long as his whole body, was caught fast in a split of the wood. In vain the little man seized it with both hands and tried to pull it out, and as often

as he made the attempt he cried out aloud and made the strangest hops into the air.

After the huntsman had watched the little fellow for a few moments, he drew near him and asked him civilly how he came to this pass. The Dwarf regarded him for a moment with his little red eyes, then rolled out a shower of curses, and told the youth that it was not his part to ask such stupid questions, but to release him instantly. In spite of this uncivil reply, Gustave was inclined, in his good humour, to assist him, and with this purpose picked up from the ground a large wedge, with which the Dwarf had apparently attempted to split the tree.

Scarcely had the huntsman picked up the wedge from the ground when the Dwarf cried out angrily to him, "Can't you hurry, you stupid, lazy fellow? You mortals are good for nothing. Be quick, or I will help you." At these last words the little man lifted one of his little legs, and in his rage kicked at the huntsman, who, although he had thought the first insolent speech made by the Dwarf excessively ridiculous, was now provoked at the little thing's impudence, and said, "Hearken, little rogue, if it is your way to ask a favour in this style, it is ours not to grant it when so asked, and if you are not immediately more quiet and civil, I've a great mind to leave you where you are."

Then the Dwarf fell into an indescribable rage; his eyes fairly flashed in his head; he roared out the most frightful curses at the huntsman, and at last even seized his axe and threw it at the head of the young man with such violence that, if he had not sprung aside, he would have been killed. As it was, it flew against the

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trunk of an oak, in which it stuck fast with its handle trembling.

“Ah!” said the huntsman, “if this is your game, I shall act accordingly.” And then he drew his long, broad hunting-knife from his girdle, upon the blade of which he had, like a pious forester, engraved a cross, and with the flat of it belaboured the little fellow stoutly.

At first the Dwarf’s rage seemed every moment to increase at this summary treatment. He twisted and turned like an eel to escape the heavy blows; but, turn as he would, the huntsman knew how to choose the right time and spot, and not one of his blows went astray,—so the little fellow grew quieter by-and-by. From abuse he fell to weeping, and before long he begged most movingly that the huntsman would desist and release him.

Gustave, who was very good-humoured, did desist at these entreaties, and, seizing the wedge again, was about to open the split in the tree when the thought suddenly occurred to him, “Why cannot I make it a condition of the Dwarf’s release that he shall show me where to find an Elfin Tree?” No sooner thought than done. He took the wedge in his hand and told the Dwarf what he desired. At first the little fellow pretended to know nothing about it, and declared peevishly that he could not help him.

“Well,” said the hunter, “if you will not tell me voluntarily where to find such a tree, I will force you to do so,” and he dropped the wedge and took out his hunting-knife again.

“Let that alone! let that alone!” shrieked the Dwarf, in the greatest distress, when he saw this movement,

“do let that alone, for this very tree that is holding me fast by my beautiful beard is an Elfin Tree!”

You can easily imagine the joy with which the huntsman let go his hunting-knife, and once more took up the wedge to release the Dwarf. He seemed now near the fulfilment of his dearest wishes; he would be able to reanimate and release the beautiful little lady. He hastily tore the little axe from the oak tree, and with a few blows he had driven the wedge so far into the hemlock stump that the Dwarf could pull out his beard. But no sooner had the little fellow recovered his liberty than, with a hearty curse, he sprang into the thicket and vanished among the trees.

Gustave quietly let him go his way, while with the Dwarf's axe he cut off a large block of the Elfin Tree, and filled his pocket with the most beautiful cones that were to be found upon the branches of the hemlock. Then he took his gun upon his shoulder and went hastily home.

His foster-parents were not a little anxious about him. He told them that he had wandered too far into the wood, and, as he had returned so cheerful and bright, they went to bed and to sleep quiet and happy. Gustave, however, instead of following their example, took the little terriers who had formerly dragged forth Regent Nutcracker and the soldiers from the fox-hole and hurried with them out to the heath, hoping, with their assistance, to find the spot beneath which the beautiful little lady was sleeping. But he could hardly have gained his end without the assistance of the cones of the Elfin Tree, for the dogs ran hither and thither over the plain, while Gustave felt him-

self impelled by some invisible power towards a certain spot, and he was shortly convinced that this was the place he had so long sought for.

It was about midnight when he drew out of his pocket one of the hemlock cones and stuck it into the ground. He still doubted the success of his undertaking, and his astonishment was great when he suddenly saw a little hemlock tree spring up before him, which, although only a few inches high, was in every respect a perfect miniature full-grown tree. Gustave could hardly restrain his joy when he saw thus how near was the deliverance of the beautiful little lady.

After three days, he set out to find the wood-carver at the appointed time and place. But first he searched through the wood to try to find the place where he had released the Dwarf, that he might procure some more of the wonderful wood of the Elfin Tree. But, although he found the place again, he could see nothing where the stump had stood but a dirty little swamp filled with frogs and other reptiles, who lifted their heads and croaked at him. He turned quickly away and sought the opening in the forest where he had met the old man, and where he now met him again. The wood-carver was very melancholy, and informed him that, in spite of all his exertions, he had been unable to find any clue to where he should find an Elfin Tree. He told Gustave, however, that he had visited the merchant's house in the town, where he had found, among some other toys, a Nutcracker, who was apparently the same who had come to life on that Christmas-eve. He drew him out, and Gustave recognized him instantly. But how was the noble Nutcracker altered ! His red

breeches had become black, his spurs were broken off, and his sabre was entirely gone; and, although his mouth was as large as ever, those long, sharp teeth which had so adorned it were gone, broken out, and, when Gustave lifted his queue, he found that his jaw was fixed and could not be closed again.

Gustave purposely waited for awhile before he told the old man what had happened to him within the last three days. How great was the wood-carver's joy when he heard it all! He sprang up, fell upon the young huntsman's neck, and when the latter drew forth the block of the Elfin Tree the old man seized it, put it into his pouch, and promised shortly, when they were needed, to make the most beautiful things out of it.

And now the pair consulted what was further to be done, and the wood-carver told the huntsman that he must let the little hemlock tree, sprung from the cone, grow quietly, until after a certain time it would suddenly begin to shoot up into the air, and "then the third night afterwards it will disclose an opening in its roots and give free egress to the enchanted Princess. And when this shall take place I will return, wherever I may be at the time, for the smallest splinter of the Elfin Tree will warn me exactly of the hour."

After this consultation they shook hands, and, taking a cordial leave of each other, one went one way and the other another.

Just about this time the adopted father of the young huntsman often declared to his sister that it was time to look about for a wife for Gustave, and the old man insisted that she must possess every possible good quality: she must be clever and beautiful, and,

besides, the forester thought that it would do no harm if she should be provided with some money. But he had never been able to find such a one, for when now and then he had taken a fancy to one of the neighbours' daughters and mentioned the matter to her parents, they always replied, "Yes, my dear friend, we should not oppose such an arrangement if the young huntsman were really your son, but we should not like to give our daughter to any one so entirely without birth and parentage." This would vex the old man, and he would go home and tell it all to his sister and Gustave. But the young man would always smile and say, "Ah, dearest father, take no trouble on my account, I shall find what God has destined for me." And with these words he would cast a stolen glance through the window towards the heath where the little hemlock tree stood, which, however, had not yet begun to grow tall.

Several months had passed since he had seen the wood-carver, and the leaves of the trees began to grow yellow and fall off,—thick mists, too, shrouded the forest in the mornings and evenings, and the huntsmen were busied with the chase all day long. But, however weary Gustave might be when returning home in the evening, he never failed to cross the heath and look after his little hemlock tree. Thus November passed. December came, and the people of the town sent every day to the foresters for hemlocks for Christmas-trees. The young huntsman, in whose faithful breast the image of the lovely lady in the white silk dress was more vivid than ever, hoped for a gift under his hemlock tree. He went out upon the heath

to watch it several times a day, and great indeed was his joy when, three days before Christmas, he found that it had grown at least a foot.

And now scarcely an hour of the day passed without his watching it, and the boughs and branches grew and spread almost perceptibly before his eyes. Thus the holy Christmas-eve approached. The old huntsman told his foster-son, with a sly smile, that he had better go out into the forest and attend to something that needed care. Gustave, who knew that this was because the old man wished to-night to prepare for him, as on every previous year, a Christmas surprise, said to himself, with a quiet smile, "Please God, I shall present you this evening with a gift that will delight you indeed," and with a heart full of expectation, love, and rapture, he hastened out upon the heath.

The old forester, with his sister, went into the guest-chamber, which was furnished with large carved tables and chairs, and its walls hung with huge stags' antlers. There stood a tall hemlock covered with candles, and stuck in the top of it fluttered and waved two large golden flags. Under the tree the forester's sister placed a beautiful new huntsman's dress and a new rifle richly mounted and inlaid with silver. Without, the north wind howled through the branches of the trees, and the mountain-brooks made strange murmurings. Then suddenly the forester put his hand to his ear, for he seemed to hear the wheels of a distant carriage.

"Hark!" he said to his sister, "do you hear nothing? It seems to me that even at this late hour a carriage is driving up the broad forest-pathway.

Then the sister hastened to the window. The noise

of wheels drew nearer, and she cried out, "You are right—look! there comes a carriage through the forest, and it is coming directly here. Now it is stopping at the gate. Who can it be?"

Then the door of the room was thrown open, and Gustave entered, leading by the hand a beautiful lady, who wore a white silk dress, and upon her head a myrtle wreath with a long, flowing veil.

"Look, father!" cried the young huntsman, joyfully, "this is my lovely bride, whom I hope you will welcome as a daughter."

The maiden was so lovely and charming to behold, that the old forester and his sister when they took her by the hand knew not what to say. And, when the maiden spoke, her voice sounded like silver bells, and she said, "I pray you receive me and let me be your dear daughter." So they were too much delighted to think who she was or whence she came, but they wept tears of joy and embraced her most tenderly.

In the midst of their rejoicing, Gustave thought of his friend, the old wood-carver, and regretted that he was not present. But, accidentally looking out of the window, he saw a man in the moonlight coming across the hill in front of the forester's dwelling, carrying upon his back a basket, which he put down and began to unpack, as though he were about to distribute Christmas gifts among the animals in the forest. The young huntsman saw with astonishment that he took out and placed upon the ground a pretty little castle, whose neat windows were suddenly illuminated from within. Then the man arose and approached the forester's house with hasty strides, and, as he did so, Gustave

saw, to his great delight, that it was his friend, the wood-carver. But how can I describe his surprise and wonder when he saw that, as this old friend left the castle behind him, the little toy grew larger and larger, and at last became a stately edifice! The windows glowed with thousands of lights burning inside; great torches of pitch were blazing at the gates, before which stood soldiers with bear-skin caps and their guns upon their shoulders. And now the wood-carver opened the forester's door, and, seeing the beautiful young maiden, he made a low bow, and then embraced the young huntsman, saying, "I see with delight that you have removed the evil spell. I have done my part, and used the Elfin wood which you gave me to the best advantage." And then he pointed through the window to the beautiful castle.

The old forester did not know what to say for very joy, and, when all went out and ascended the hill to visit the new and splendid castle, he thought he was dreaming a lovely dream. Everything here was as finely ordered and as well arranged as in the palace of the mightiest king. The young huntsman thought he recognized old acquaintances in the soldiers with bear-skin caps, who presented arms before his bride and himself at the castle-gates, and the tall huntsman who stood at the head of the steps and tore open the great doors seemed also strangely familiar. But when they came to the grand staircase leading to the splendid apartments, the young huntsman, who was now called Prince Gustave, laughed aloud, for there stood Regent Nutcracker as large as life with two silver candlesticks in his hands. He made a low bow and announced

that he was the chief Steward, and hoped to win their Graces' favour. His dress, which had been very much spoiled by the merchant's children, had been repaired as well as possible. But the spurs and sabre were gone, and, instead of a hat, he wore a coloured cap trimmed with bells, which jingled merrily.

And now all ascended the grand staircase, and the marriage was celebrated with great pomp, and they all lived together many, many years in peace and happiness,—indeed they must be living still, if they have not died since.

THE DWARFS' NEST.

ONCE upon a time there lived a man, a weaver by trade, who was accustomed to procure from the merchants of the town where he dwelt quantities of raw material in silk and wool, which he wove at his own house into beautiful fabrics. But as life in a town, although ever so economical and in the poorest hovel, was too expensive for his small means, he looked about for a dwelling somewhere else, and found one at last, which, although wretched and poverty-stricken enough in appearance, afforded him at least a shelter from wind and weather.

This dwelling stood in the neighbourhood of a village near the city, and was a rickety little hut, jutting out from the side of an old stone wall, which had been part, in old times, it was said, of a dungeon, and had belonged to an extensive castle, whose ruins were yet to be seen in an adjacent field. Close to this dungeon wall, the village shepherd had, some time before the beginning of our story, built a small house and lived in it, that he might be near his flock who found excellent pasturage among the ruins, where rich grass and weeds grew luxuriantly between the black, crumbling stones.

But the shepherd had not lived there long when very odd circumstances forced him to abandon his little dwelling. Sometimes, for instance, in the middle of the night there would be such an uproar and commotion among his sheep, lying partly around his hut and partly in the court-yard of the ruined castle, that one would have supposed a dozen wolves to be loose among them. The poor animals would bleat most piteously and rush hither and thither in the wildest terror, and away through the fields wherever they could find an opening in the old walls. Then the shepherd was obliged to whistle and call to them with all his might, but the animals, usually so docile and obedient to his call, would no longer listen to him. In their flight they often missed their way and would, at times, fall and perish miserably among the ruins. The shepherd's dogs, that often battled with and drove away the wolves from the sheep in the daytime, when this uproar began in the middle of the night, put their tails between their legs, howling with terror, and neither coaxing nor blows could induce them to go among the sheep and restore order. The shepherd, by no means a timorous man, was driven to desperation by the loss of his sheep, and being, of course, wakeful and on the watch at night, would rush out of his hut at the first beginning of the tumult, which usually took place on a moonlight night. But although it was so light that everything around showed clear and distinct, he could never discover either man or beast to terrify his flock. And yet it seemed to him sometimes that, while he was running hither and thither among the sheep, he could now and then hear a low laugh, or a faint halloo, like the

distant shout of the hunters when they are following the chase in the forest.

After several of the villagers, who at first were suspicious of the shepherd when their sheep were lost, had shared his nightly watch with him, and had seen the strange commotion among the flock with their own eyes upon many a moonlight night and heard the faint shouts and laughter with their own ears, they became convinced that it was all the work of the Brownies or Dwarfs, who had from time immemorial inhabited the neighbouring rocks and caves, and who were thus having a hunt for their own pleasure at the expense of the poor shepherd. This was not the first time that they had come forth and teased and annoyed human beings by their pranks and tricks. They had been seen many a time by the old and young of the village as they went to, or returned from, the yearly fair in the neighbouring town, or when they took some little journey into the surrounding country. On these occasions they often had to go through little green glades in the forest, carpeted with fresh moss and encompassed by ancient oaks. When in the midst of such a place a single great tree stood with spreading branches, forming a leafy tower, it was sure to be a resort of the Brownies, and they would come here in crowds when the first rays of the full moon shone over the hills, to have a dance and to feast. Old hunters, who, in pursuing a stag, had often been near these places late at night, would tell of the tricks and dances of the little people, and could not say enough of their grace and wonderful agility. But such an unbidden spectator had to lie perfectly quiet in some place of concealment, for

if the sharp eyes and ears of the Dwarfs detected him, they would stop their revels instantly and vanish through the air, making a noise in their flight like that of a swarm of bees hovering over a field of flowers.

Sometimes it happened, when an inquisitive observer incautiously approached too near the little people, that while the Dwarfs were vanishing, he was so cuffed and boxed on the ear by invisible hands that he fell, stunned, to the ground, and awoke the next morning with his face covered with bruises all black and blue.

For a long time the Dwarfs conducted their revels at a distance from the habitations of mankind. But, as many of the forests had been thinned out and most of the fine old trees cut down, they selected the ruins for their haunt, for the nature of the place offered no temptation to the greed of avaricious men. Here it was very difficult to see them in their nightly dances, for, since they had been driven from their quiet forest-glades, they had grown more prudent, and were seldom visible to human eyes when they danced, and the example of mortals had taught them to be more malicious, so that it rarely happened that any one was able to watch them unobserved. Thus faith in the existence of the little people had grown somewhat dim, and even if some inquisitive fellow showed his bruises in the morning and told of his adventures with the Brownies, the villagers laughed at him and declared that his face was bruised by the cover of the beer-can.

But the shepherd's experience again drew attention to the little men, and the owners of the sheep, who had

lost quite a number, decided that they must resign the field to the Dwarfs, and leave them undisturbed in the old ruin, their place of refuge. Accordingly the shepherd left his hut and took his flock elsewhere, and the Dwarfs soon showed that they were not in the least implacable, for, as soon as they were left to pursue their midnight revels undisturbed by the bleating and trampling of the sheep, they, by their magic arts, caused the flock to thrive and increase, so that those villagers who had suffered loss were soon amply indemnified.

In the meanwhile the shepherd's hut stood empty, and, although it had never been in a very habitable condition, it was now worse than ever. The windows were broken, and the sun, moon, wind, and rain penetrated into both rooms. But the walls, which were built of sods, were firmer than before, for the sods had grown together, and there was such a thicket of weeds and garden vegetables all around that from a distance the place looked like a great, green bird's-nest, and, in memory of the little people, the villagers called it the "Dwarfs' Nest," and the neighbouring ruin the "Dwarfs' Castle."

Thus the house had been standing for some years empty, when the weaver, of whom you have heard above, returned home after a long absence from the place of his birth. As all his near relatives and friends had died in the mean time, and his parents had become very poor before their death, the distant relatives of the young man, who were still living, would have nothing to do with him, and not one could be found who would even rent him a small room, where he

might set up his loom and support himself by the work of his hands. They had another ground for their behaviour. The weaver's father, who had been a game-keeper, had married a collier's daughter, who was skilled in the knowledge of healing-herbs, and had, therefore, been shunned and maligned by everybody as a witch, although she had never done any harm to any one. This reputation her son shared, for the women of the village had always regarded him, when a boy, with envy, because, while their own children were often sick and puny, the game-keeper's son, little Conrad, rejoiced in robust health and strength, and was the handsomest boy that could be imagined. As his parents had fortunately lived long enough to provide for him during his long apprenticeship to a master-weaver in the town until he started on his travels as a journeyman, he had needed nothing, and had never been obliged to maintain himself. But scarcely had these good people received two or three letters from him in his first absence after the well-spent period of his apprenticeship—letters that told how content his present master was with him and his work—when they died, leaving their son nothing, for their little furniture was seized by their avaricious neighbours to defray the funeral expenses.

At last Conrad, having learned much of men and manners in many parts of the country, returned, and wished to set up his loom in his native village. But, as we have said before, no one would have anything to do with him, and if that love which is common to all for the place of one's birth had not bound him to this village, and prevented him from

leaving the place where his parents were buried, he would have turned his back upon his home on the first day of his arrival there and gone out anew into the world. As it was, he went to every house in the place seeking a lodging, and was sometimes turned away and refused with harsh words and abuse. Some of these people told him that there was only one place fit for him—the Dwarfs' Nest,—the Dwarfs would probably allow him to rent the Dwarfs' Nest if he would offer sufficiently high payment for lodgings there. Without heeding these insults, the weaver suddenly remembered the little hut in which he had often played as a boy, and which, upon his entrance into the village, he had recognized at the foot of the dungeon-wall, with its green sides and roof, and he thought that perhaps, after all, he could not do better than follow the counsel that these hard-hearted people had maliciously given him.

He hastily turned his steps towards the hovel, and, opening the mouldering door, which at first offered some resistance to his efforts, he saw; to his great joy, that, although the interior of the hut was somewhat ruinous, it could easily be repaired at the cost of some labour and pains. He immediately began to clear out of it the leaves, dust, and decayed wood, and then went to town and brought back some of his friends, who were carpenters, glaziers, and slaters by trade, and with their help the Dwarfs' Nest soon presented a most comfortable appearance, and Conrad was delighted to set up his loom ready for work.

The evil-minded men in the village regarded these proceedings and alterations with no small amazement,

laughing in their sleeves and rejoicing at the same time that poor Conrad would soon have to move away again as soon as the Dwarfs discovered his presence. Although the weaver himself remembered the legends which he had often heard in his boyhood concerning the Dwarfs' Nest, yet he had travelled much since that time, and as, in his wanderings, nothing strange or unaccountable had ever happened to him, he had gradually lost all faith in such stories, and thought of everything else during his first night in his little dwelling rather than Dwarfs, who could come and disturb him there. It was a very clear night, with a full moon shining, but his thoughts would not allow him to sleep much. He heard the church-clock in the village strike hour after hour, and at last twelve strokes announced that midnight had arrived. And now he seriously determined to go to sleep, turned on his side, and was just shutting his eyes when he heard a faint hemming and coughing in the room. He opened his eyes wide, and who shall describe his astonishment when he saw beside him a little man, scarcely a span high, dressed in a leather-coloured doublet, breeches, black stockings, and shoes fastened with silver buckles so enormous, in comparison with the rest of his figure, that one could hardly understand how the little fellow could walk with them !

At first the weaver thought he must be dreaming, and rubbed his eyes to awaken himself. However, upon collecting his thoughts he became convinced that he was thoroughly awake. In the mean time the little man walked up and down the room, looked at the new wooden furniture, and jumping with one leap upon the

window-seat, tapped the new, clear window panes with a little stick that he carried in his hand, and smiled in a satisfied manner. The cleanliness of the floor also, and the fresh white walls, seemed to please him, for he nodded his little head, and gave expression to his satisfaction by a kind of murmuring noise. The weaver, regarding all this with astonishment, sat up in bed, and tried to inform the little man of his presence by coughing and clearing his throat. But the little fellow at first took no notice of him, except to wave his hand towards him, as if to say, "In a moment, in a moment," and then pursued his investigations. At last, however, he appeared to have finished his examination of the room, and with one jump he sprang upon the table by the side of the weaver's bed, and seated himself comfortably upon a big piece of bread, from which he now and then broke off a crumb and put it into his mouth. And then, after Dwarf and man had regarded each other curiously for a few moments, the former said in a shrill, squeaking voice, while he gave another glance around the room, "We are glad, my friend, to have procured a tenant who has put everything into such good order, and if you will only fulfil to our satisfaction the conditions, which we, as owners of this house, impose upon you, I hope we shall always live happily together." The weaver, who had never expected to pay any rent for the ruinous old Dwarfs' Nest, pricked up his ears, and taking great care not to offend one of these dreaded beings, asked modestly what the conditions were of which his new landlord spoke. The Dwarf in a few words told him the story of the shepherd, whose stupid flock had an-



“With one jump he sprang upon the table, and seated himself comfortably upon a big piece of bread.”

noyed and worried his people beyond description, and added, that the little men had driven the shepherd from the Dwarfs' Nest, not from any dislike to the human race, but that they might have some peace in their place of assemblage. Conrad, encouraged by the friendly address and good-humoured smile of the little man, recovered from his first amazement, and replied that he was delighted indeed to make such a distinguished acquaintance so entirely unexpectedly, and that he only hoped that the rent of his new dwelling would be such as he could pay, for, to tell the truth, silver or gold he had none. The Dwarf broke off a large piece of bread for himself, and replied with a smile, "The worthless articles that you mention can be of no manner of use to us. We possess jewels and gold in such overflowing measure that I suppose you would consider us a wealthy people. But we need many things that we can only obtain through the assistance of kind-hearted, industrious men. We have watched you from your childhood, and have seen with pleasure that you have preserved your heart free from guile and deceit, and this is an additional reason why we have not opposed your taking possession of the house. We Dwarfs know how to prize mortal excellence, and we seek the society of men who are pious, honest, and industrious, rather than of those (of whom, by the way, the shepherd was one) who are in every way the reverse. Continue, then, to be as industrious as heretofore, labour quietly to maintain yourself, and our aid and counsel shall not be wanting. But now listen to the conditions of which I spoke, and which are, that every month when the moon is at the full you shall give us

entire possession of your house and furniture, and even of your loom. Do not intrude upon us at such times, but shut yourself up in your room, and we will take care that so deep a slumber shall overcome you as shall prevent you from hearing the noise of our work."

At the last words the countenance of the Dwarf grew very grave, and he concluded his address by saying, "Remember not to be so silly as to try and observe us at work, and remember too, that only as long as your heart is free from the common vices of mortals are we able to send sleep to you. It is not in our power to banish the thoughts of evil deeds or to free you from the stings of a guilty conscience."

The weaver listened to all this quietly, and rejoiced to find that the rent was one he could so easily pay; he cordially shook hands with the Dwarf, promising to do all in his power to ensure the little people from disturbance during their occupations.

The agreement thus concluded, the little fellow jumped down from the bed, gave the young man a friendly smile, and disappeared. The weaver then laid down and slept until morning. The next day he took his first journey to town to procure work, and it seemed as though already the Dwarfs were assisting him, for the first merchant to whom he applied gave him an encouraging reception; and after the foreman of the establishment had proved him and found that the young man really understood weaving, his name was written in a big book, and a quantity of silk and wool was given to him that he might weave it into a fine piece of cloth. Arrived at home, the weaver went diligently to work, and never had he been able to accomplish so

much ; his progress astonished even himself. The little accidents which will happen, even to those most skilled in weaving, occurred only very seldom ; his threads rarely broke, and never became tangled. When he sat down at his wheel to wind his spools, he was amazed to see them whirl around as swift as lightning, and yet the wool and silk lay as evenly upon them as though they were wound slowly and with the greatest care. When the moon appeared in the heavens like a sickle, and began to increase, he knew that the night was approaching when his rent was to be paid by his leaving his house to the Dwarfs, and then he took good care to arrange matters so that his work was finished for the merchant in the town, and he exerted himself to put his loom into good order that the little men might have no reason to complain of him.

On the nights when the moon was full he would sit at his window in the twilight and look out upon the landscape where the blue mists rose slowly, listening to the song of the crickets in the grass, and enjoying the lovely view, until the heavens around the Dwarfs' Nest grew brighter and the full moon appeared. Then he would betake himself to his bed, and, as he was troubled by no evil thoughts, he would soon fall asleep. Sometimes he thought that just before sleep overcame him he could hear a strange noise and humming, but as he was not inquisitive by nature he did not trouble himself about it, but was soon sound asleep. When he arose in the morning after such a night, and went to his loom, he could always see that the Dwarfs had been at work there, for here and there between the bands and the

wheels a little piece of silk of an odd colour would be found sticking, and two or three threads of gold would be lying about the floor; and once on the weaver's beam, upon which the completed cloth is wound, he found a narrow strip of stuff, which the Dwarfs had left there when they cut the piece out of the loom, of such a strange colour and design that he had never seen anything like it before. He took it off, and the next time he went to town he begged the merchant's foreman to give him silk of the same colours, and going home, set himself to work to imitate the Dwarfs' design. If he did not quite succeed, at all events he completed such a beautiful piece of stuff that the merchant had never seen anything like it before, and paid him a heavy price for it.

After this work, every one connected with the manufactory paid some attention to the young man, and the master manufacturers, who had hitherto only regarded him as a diligent workman, but nothing more, tried to discover whether the beautiful design of his work were really his own,—that, if so, they might profit by his talent. And thus the poor weaver, who had, as we have said, never been even appreciated, much less esteemed, was very much flattered by the attention of the foreman and young clerks of the establishment. They invited him to join their evening parties, and if at first he did not feel entirely at home in these circles where a great deal of beer and wine was drunk, and where the conversation was not always what it should be, and if his coarse coat contrasted rather strongly with the costume of these youths, who were starched and ironed and laced and curled, yet the fumes of the

wine, and the well-known skill of the weaver, levelled all differences of rank.

Hitherto Conrad had been able to live very well upon his earnings without working very hard, but, as his money went with incredible rapidity at these nightly carousals, he was forced to work several hours earlier and later than his earnings might be sufficiently increased to defray the expenses of his evening entertainments.

Sometimes, when he was returning home late at night, he could not help thinking that his present life was not leading him in the right way, and, as he passed through the old ruins on his way to his dwelling, he now and then thought that he could distinguish the figure of his little landlord sitting upon a stone and shaking his head sadly at him, but he easily convinced himself that he was mistaken, and refused to admit that the Dwarfs had any reason for being dissatisfied with him, for, as often as the moon was at the full, he left his loom in perfect order, and had never dared to pass the night away from home, more especially perhaps as he was always extremely anxious to cut from the beam the narrow strip of stuff that the Dwarfs now regularly left for him, and from which he copied those beautiful designs that called forth the admiration of his employers. But once it happened either that his almanac was wrong or that he thought the Dwarfs could get on very well without him, for he cut his piece of stuff out of the loom and carried it the same night to town, where it was received, and his companions would not allow him to depart until the moon was high in the heavens.

As he walked home he thought, with anxiety, that he had neglected his landlord's comfort, for he had not left his loom in good order, and he had not remained quietly at home ; but, although the idea occurred to him that he might walk on quickly and peep at the little people at work, he stood too much in awe of the little beings, and of his own promise, to do so. He was not yet so spoiled as to forget his honour entirely. As it happened to be summer-time, he spent the rest of the mild night under an old pine tree, where he stretched himself out upon the moss and slept soundly.

When he arose the next morning, he walked towards his dwelling with hurried steps and a beating heart, for he feared that the Dwarfs might have revenged themselves upon him in some way for his neglect. But this was not the case ; he opened the door of his house and listened for some unusual sound, but all was quiet and in order,—the wooden clock above his bed was ticking peacefully, and the thrush that hung in a cage at the window was singing a merry song in honour of the rising sun. He hurried to his loom, and here he found nothing unusual. As before, the little ends of silk and gold thread that the Dwarfs had used were lying around, only he found the design of the piece of stuff left still upon the beam very strangely altered. Hitherto the colours had harmonized so prettily, and had formed so graceful a pattern, that it suggested to the mind some sweet and lovely melody, but to-day there was something weird and strange about both the colours and the design of the pattern left by the little men. There was an odd combination of red

and black, with here and there fine sparkling threads of silver that flashed zigzag, like lightning, and, as Conrad looked at it, he felt more keenly than ever that he had not treated his little landlords well; that he was leading a life that was far from good for him, and neglecting the advice which the Dwarfs had given him.

But, alas! the evil example of the young people in the town had already done him so much harm that he did not heed the still, small voice of his conscience, and busied himself with copying the new piece of stuff, the strange design of which was more in keeping than the former ones with his present reckless state of mind. The new piece of work also pleased the foreman and gentlemen in town extremely well, for their minds were more false and frivolous than the weaver's. The foreman was a sly, cunning fellow, who had long been much puzzled to understand how so simple-minded a man as the weaver could design and execute all these beautiful patterns. Of course he never dreamed that Conrad copied Dwarfs' work, but he thought that the weaver had brought home from his travels a quantity of beautiful patterns which he thus imitated one by one in order that they might bring him in the largest possible amount of money. He had already, when with Conrad over the wine-cup, led the conversation to the beautiful designs, but the weaver's natural caution had stood him in good stead, and he had, as yet, betrayed nothing. Nevertheless the foreman did not cease to ply him with sly questions, and at last by his wiles induced the poor fellow to impart his whole secret to him, and even to bring him a sample of the Dwarfs

manufacture, at the sight of which every one skilled in such matters held up his hands in amazement.

The only thing that Conrad did not tell was the time and the place where the Dwarfs pursued their labours. He feared that if he revealed this the little people might be watched and thus chased away, leaving him with no resources for earning a livelihood. His mode of life had so altered him that he no longer worked carefully or diligently, and it was only from the Dwarfs' work that he derived any profit. Even his poor imitations of their wonderful designs were so much liked by the merchants that they were sure to bring a high price. The foreman told several of his friends of the source whence the weaver obtained his patterns, and they in their turn told others, whereupon Conrad's reputation became so doubtful that his former friends were, or thought themselves obliged, to drop all association with him. But he had now grown so accustomed to jovial society that he sought out other wild companions, with whom he caroused through whole nights; and although, at first, he had been contented with wine, he now hardly ever returned home without being intoxicated by deep draughts of brandy.

All that the Dwarf had told him so seriously at the conclusion of their interview, that the little people would prove his friends and protectors only so long as his heart was free from the guile and vices that beset humanity, and that their labour in his house would assist him only whilst his conscience allowed him to sleep peacefully, was now shown to be true. He had already turned and tossed upon his bed for many a night when the full moon shone, waking now and then to hear a

faint murmuring in his room,—a bewildering sound that so confused him that he never at such times regained full possession of his faculties, but fell again into an uneasy sleep. As his manner of life did not improve, but became more extravagant and dissipated every day, these wakeful periods grew longer, until he sometimes tossed upon his bed for hours, while the Dwarfs were at work in the next room.

Hitherto he had always respected their prohibition, and had never pried, either with eyes or ears, into their doings, but he thought less and less of their warnings. And although at first he resisted the temptation to watch them, at last, one night when the moon was full, he sat up in his bed and listened attentively.

He distinctly heard the whirr of the loom, the shuttle flying with lightning rapidity, and the wheels rolling noisily, as though turned by a whirlwind. He arose, and his hand was upon the latch of the door separating his sleeping-room from his work-room, when better thoughts conquered ; he tore himself away from the spot, and threw himself once more upon his bed.

The next morning he hurried to his loom, but the little piece of cloth that the Dwarfs had always left for him was nowhere to be seen ; and the loom, too, was not in the order in which it had always heretofore been left. The bands and wheels were in confusion, and the weaver saw plainly that he must resign all hope of the continuance of the protection that the Dwarfs had hitherto afforded him. And in town he was very coldly received when he presented himself with empty hands, not even bringing a new design, as had been his custom, and as the Dwarfs' assistance had hitherto

enabled him to do every month. He was even received with harsh reproaches, and told that his employers were neither satisfied with his work nor with his present mode of life. Still the foreman, as an especial favour, he said, gave him once more a quantity of silk, and told him that if he did not this time finish a good and careful piece of work, he would have no more employment from the factory. Conrad went home thinking of many things and possessed by most uncomfortable feelings as he remembered the old times when he had led a life so different from his present one. And yet he was deterred from entering the tavern as usual, not by these thoughts, but by the fact that, after a long search, he could not find a single coin in his pockets, and did not dare to ask for further credit. So he went home and put his loom in order, and took pains in putting the silk into it that he might complete a fine piece of work. He succeeded, after a great deal of labour in these preparations, but he was not animated by an honest desire to be industrious, but rather by greed of gain, that he might pursue his ruinous courses.

Thus the month slipped by. His work was finished rather late in the evening upon which the Dwarfs always paid their visit, and he thought it well done. As he was examining it and thinking of the small sum of money that he should receive for so much toil, an idea occurred to him, which at first, it is true, he rejected, but which soon took possession of him. He thought, for the first time in his life, that he might deceive his employer by cutting off a few yards of the cloth he had just woven, and selling it for his own

profit. It would bring him in quite as much as his poor wages. At first his better nature refused to listen to such a wicked plan. But he soon found that he who admits an evil thought into his mind will soon be mastered by it. In short, after a struggle with himself, he took up his scissors and cut off a piece from his work.

As it was too late in the day to carry the rest home, he rolled it up hastily and threw himself upon his bed, with a beating heart, and tried to sleep. But this was impossible, for he heard hour after hour strike without being able to close his eyes. And soon it grew brighter and brighter, and the moon arose. At the same time there was such a humming and buzzing in the air around the Dwarfs' Nest that it seemed as though a swarm of bees were at work, and he heard it all much more clearly than ever before. The little people went right to work at the loom, and, as the wheels flew around, a strange melody resounded through the house, monotonous, but so sweet that it closed the listener's heavy eyelids. But then the theft that he had committed came into his mind, and his heart beat so that it was impossible to sleep.

Thus he lay wide awake for about an hour, tossing restlessly in bed. And again the desire beset him to disobey, to transgress the injunctions of his landlord, and watch the doings of the Dwarfs. He fought against it for a long time—now getting up and then lying down again—now stopping his ears that he might hear nothing and then listening more attentively than ever. It seemed to him as though invisible powers were contending for mastery over him. At last he arose and stood before the door ready to open it and surprise

the Dwarfs at their work. Even now he attempted to resist the temptation, but it was too strong for him. He gave a slight push to the door and it flew open; but, instead of seeing anything, the weaver suddenly received a tremendous blow and fell senseless upon the floor.

When he came to himself he rubbed his eyes, and at first could not remember what had happened to him. He stared about and found that he was indeed in his hut, but its walls were no longer whole and clean as before. Here and there were great cracks through which the morning wind was blowing and playing with the nettles and dry leaves that were heaped upon the dust-covered floor. Conrad, whose head was still confused, arose slowly, and could hardly remember what he had been doing or thinking the evening before. Beside him lay the pieces of the shattered loom, and before him his folded work. Only when he saw the piece that he had cut off from it did he clearly remember all that had occurred, and thought with horror of what he had done. For the first time he felt remorse for his evil ways. He determined to begin a different life, and took the piece of stuff and the piece which he had cut off, resolved to carry both to his employer and confess his fault and promise to begin anew. Refreshed by these good intentions, he left the Dwarfs' Nest, now in ruins, determined not to return thither, for he unjustly ascribed his present trials to the agency of the little men. As he stepped out into the clear morning air, a dark spell seemed to be removed from him, and he was truly ashamed of the life he had been leading. He turned his steps to the long unvisited grave of his parents, and, after re-

newing there his vows of amendment, he went on towards town with fresh courage.

He had almost reached it when he sat down by the roadside and opened his parcel that he might fold the piece of silk afresh. But who can describe his terror when, upon opening the paper, he found the silk gone and its place filled with dirt and dust? In despair he struck his forehead with his clenched fist and rolled over and over on the grass. He heaped the Dwarfs with reproaches, for he considered them the sole cause of his misfortunes. He started up, then flung himself upon the ground again, and then rushed about for hours among the rocks and forests, repeatedly examining the parcel in his hand, but in vain, the dust did not turn to silk. And then he proclaimed aloud his misery and ruin. Sometimes he thought he heard around him hoarse laughter, which increased his rage, for, however swiftly he might dart to the spot whence the noise proceeded, he found nothing. While he was in this state of despair, evening came on, and he flung himself exhausted at the foot of some jagged rocks. Here he wept aloud and bemoaned his fate as the unhappiest of men, from whom all means of improvement had been snatched at the very moment when he meant to begin a new life. But he soon gathered a sort of comfort from despair and cried out: "Well, then, God knows that I wished to improve and change my manner of life, but He has rejected the repentant sinner and deprived him of everything that could help him in the way of improvement. Now I don't care what happens to me, and any one who wants me may have me."

Scarcely had he spoken these words when he heard a noise above his head, and looking up he saw a strange little figure sitting upon a ledge of rocks. At first he thought it was his landlord, and was about to start up and run away. But closer inspection told him that the little creature before him was very different from his former friend. He was two feet high, and had a big, misshapen head, and a sly, malicious face, from which small, red eyes looked out wickedly. His dress consisted of a black leather coat and breeches of the same. Large riding-boots covered his feet and legs, but he had taken off one of these boots and held it on his lap stroking and rubbing it. The little man cleared his throat, and said to the weaver, who was anxiously listening, "Yes, yes, my dear fellow, if you really mean what you have just said, that any one may have you who wants you, I assure you that you can find no better master than myself. Will you enter my service?"

The weaver, who was really shocked to find how wicked his words had been, was about to run off, but at the first step his whole helpless condition and weight of misfortunes came into his mind, and he thought within himself, "I may, at least, hear what the little fellow has to say," and so he turned round again and asked, "What do you want with me?"

The little man turned and twisted the boot in his lap, and then replied, grinning, "My dear friend, I read in your thoughts that you think me, in fact, the Evil One himself, but really you do me too much honour. I am a much more insignificant personage, and belong to that race to which you mortals give the name of

Kobolds. I have not the slightest desire for your soul, for I should not know what in the world to do with such a thing ; but you can do me a great service this very night if you will, and besides the gold which you will thus gain, you may revenge yourself upon your enemies who are mine also, — upon those miserable little wretches, I mean, who have ruined you entirely with their nonsensical conditions."

When the weaver found that nothing threatened the welfare of his soul, the prospect of working some harm to the Dwarfs, whom he persisted in thinking had treated him unkindly, was very attractive, and he declared himself ready to serve the Kobold. The creature, with a grin, drew on his boot, then took out of his pocket a little flask, from which the weaver took a hearty draught, and then the Kobold commanded Conrad to go to a neighbouring pond and bring thence two long reeds. The weaver obeyed, while the Kobold took off his other boot and began to rub and stroke it as he had done to its fellow. Down by the pond Conrad cut two huge reeds, with flowering tops, and carried them to the Kobold, who seemed well satisfied with them, and immediately drew on his boot again.

"Hearken," said he, "although you are only my servant, and there is no need that I should tell you why I do this or that, yet I will tell you in a few words what I intend to do for you." Here the Kobold rubbed his hands, and grinned significantly, as he continued : "The Dwarfs, to whom you gave up your dwelling every night of the full moon, have always been at war with the ancient and honourable race of Kobolds. The garments and stuffs that they wove in your loom were

destined for wedding-clothes for a pair who are to be married to-night, and whose festivities I propose to interrupt. If you had not disturbed the little men at their weaving yesterday evening they would have completed their work, and I should have had no power over them. But now I can go to them and steal away the fair bride whom I have long loved."

If, upon hearing this, the weaver at first thought that he had treated his old landlord very unkindly, his mind instantly recurred to his own misfortunes, and he felt glad that revenge was within his reach. The Kobold got up, and commanded the weaver to pick up the two reeds from the ground. Then he put one between his legs, and told his servant to do the same, after which he chirruped and moved his legs like a horseman who wishes to urge on a lazy steed. Who can describe Conrad's astonishment when he found that the reed between his legs increased in length and breadth until it became a full-grown horse, which, with the Kobold's, rushed away over field and hedge. But, alas! he had not taken sufficient care in mounting, and held the flowering top in his hand, so that, consequently, he now found himself sitting backwards on his steed, holding, instead of the bridle, the tail, to which he clung tightly, to the Kobold's infinite amusement.

Thus they rode on in the night through thick forests, over desert heaths, down steep abysses, and through foaming torrents, and nothing surprised the weaver more than that he did not fall off his horse. Indeed, he felt no jolting as with an ordinary horse, for the magic steed that he bestrode seemed to glide over the ground without moving his feet. At last

they appeared to have reached the place of their destination. They arrived in a valley full of strangely-shaped rocks, where the Kobold suddenly stopped his horse and scrambled down to the ground. The animal instantly shrunk all up and became a reed as before.

The weaver, who was a little giddy with all the wonders that he had seen, felt himself suddenly bumped down upon the ground, and when he looked round after his horse it had vanished, and he saw only a bent reed lying at his feet. "We are on the spot," said the Kobold, "and, if you conduct yourself well, in a short time the charming little bride will be mine, and your reward shall be great, only follow my directions exactly. Take hold of my belt and do not let go until we are again in the open air with the pretty sprite. But, above all, remember not to speak a single word, whatever may happen." The weaver promised to fulfil these easy directions, and seized the girdle of the Kobold, who immediately went to one of the huge masses of rock and slipped easily through a crack in it. Conrad hesitated a little here, for it seemed impossible to him that he, with his great body, could get through such a narrow crack. But he was ashamed to linger behind, and so gave a little push and instantly he was with his master within the rock. He could not help feeling his body carefully, for he was convinced that the slipping through must have made him as thin as cardboard. But this was not so. He found himself with his master in a large marble hall, magnificently hung with thousands of lights. A crowd of Dwarfs, about the size of his landlord and very much like him, were busily running hither and thither,

carrying in their hands gold and silver dishes, whence streamed an odour so savoury that the poor weaver, who had not tasted a morsel since morning, was devoured by hunger. Dread overcame him at first, for, although he knew that both his master and himself were invisible to these little beings, he could not help thinking that they must notice him when his master led him directly through their midst, and so he shut his eyes as the ostrich does when it hopes to escape the observation of its enemies. Suddenly lovely music greeted his ears, and such brilliant rays of light pierced his shut eyelids that he could not help opening his eyes wide to look around him. Then he saw that he was in the midst of the wedding assemblage of the Dwarfs, who were seated in long rows at a table, feasting and merry-making. On a raised platform at the end of the hall sat the musicians, making such delicious and heart-touching music that the weaver thought he had never heard anything half so fine. Although the hall was very lofty for the Dwarfs, he had to stoop in it, and when he crouched in a corner, his head reached far over the little people's table, at the upper end of which sat the bride and bridegroom. But what were Conrad's sensations when, in the bridegroom, he recognized his landlord, and saw that he, as well as the other Dwarfs, was dressed in cloth spun upon his loom !

The bridegroom looked extremely happy, and paid every attention to his bride, who was such a lovely, charming little creature that the weaver repented from his heart his promise to steal her away for his new master. The Kobold had clambered up to the ceiling

and clung there to the weaver's head just over a chandelier. He put his lips to the weaver's ear and said, with a grin, "You see that the moment is favourable. Stretch out your hand slowly, seize the little bride in a firm grasp, and place her here beside me, that she may be invisible to the rest, and in the bustle that ensues we will slip away unobserved. Do you hear? Stretch out your hand instantly." But Conrad was suddenly overcome with remorse, and thought how wrong it was to revenge himself thus upon his landlord, who had never done him any injury until he, by his neglect and dissipation, had deeply offended him. He tried to state the case respectfully to the Kobold, but the little creature, clinging fast to his ear, buzzed like a wasp, and would not let him speak a word, saying, "Hush! you must not flinch—you are my servant. Stretch out your hand, I say, and seize the little thing, or I will leave you, and woe betide you if the Dwarfs see you."

Terrified at this threat, Conrad stretched out his hand, but his better feeling conquered, and he drew it back again empty. "What are you doing?" buzzed the Kobold in his ear. "Oh, sir," replied the weaver, "something tickled my nose, and I was afraid I should sneeze." "Hm—hm—attend!" said the little fellow; "don't speak, but attend to your business." Again the weaver stretched out his hand, and was just about to seize the poor little bride, when his arm twitched so that he once more drew back his hand empty. Then the Kobold gave his ear a little bite, and grumbled so angrily that it seemed to the weaver as if a swarm of hornets were flying about his head. "You

fool ! what do you mean ? Why don't you pick up the bride ?" "Forgive me, sir," replied Conrad, "the steam from the meats is so hot, that the perspiration is rolling in drops down my face, and if I had not wiped it away it would have fallen upon the table and betrayed us." This, at least, was no falsehood, only it was his struggle with himself, and not the steam from the meats that made the drops stand upon his brow.

The weaver now put out his hand for the third time, and the struggle within him between good and evil was so great that his fingers closed and unclosed convulsively. He would have had the bride in his hand in one moment more if, just at this instant, the bridegroom had not handed her a nosegay, which she took with a smile, and pressed to her breast and lips. In Conrad's anguish he tried to find a means to delay the fatal grasp, but in vain ; the little creature was all but in his hand, when affected by the strong perfume of the flowers, she sneezed violently, and the weaver, forgetting, in his confusion, the Kobold's injunctions, cried out aloud, "God bless you!"

Instantly the rocks resounded with a crash like thunder,—it lightened, and the Dwarfs and the table grew indistinct and vanished, while the Kobold growled, angrily, "Is this the way you keep your promise, you vile, mortal vagabond?" And then he trod with his clumsy boot so heavily upon the weaver's neck that the poor fellow fell senseless on the ground, and lay there for some time. When he came to himself his limbs felt as though they had been beaten, and it was long before he could remember what had happened. He rubbed his eyes, and was just rising, that

he might creep slowly away, when, to his astonishment and terror, he saw standing beside him his landlord, who thus addressed him: "Do not be afraid,—I am not going to do you any further injury. The punishment that we inflicted upon you was perfectly just, for you remember how you violated the conditions of our agreement, and what a wicked, dissipated fellow you have been for some time past. But let all be forgiven and forgotten. As you, last night, did me and my dear wife a great service, I will help you to become once more a happy, honest man. To give you gold and silver would do you no good, for I know well that money seldom brings content to human beings, but is, on the contrary, often the cause of manifold ills and trials to them. But go home to your hut and begin to work as before. We do not need your aid any longer, and therefore shall not again test your curiosity. I hope you will prove honest and true, and not fall into your late miserable ways again. If I give you no visible proof of my gratitude, you will soon be convinced that we mean to assist you with invisible advice and aid."

The Dwarf then vanished, and as the weaver looked around him he saw by the light of the first rays of the sun, which shone over the mountains, that he was just in the vicinity of the Dwarfs' Nest. He hastened to his dwelling, and, remembering the desolation and confusion that he had left there the day before, he was greatly surprised to see nothing of it to-day. The door was closed, but he heard the clock ticking, and the thrush singing within. And everything was in the most beautiful order, his loom thoroughly repaired, and the stuff from which he had cut the piece lying by it wrapped up

entire. And he also observed, to his delight, that it was the most beautiful piece of work that he had ever seen. He carried it to the town, but the scene of his former dissipation was so hateful to him that he left it in a great hurry, as soon as his business there was concluded ; and although he soon won for himself, by his beautiful work, the confidence and esteem of his employers, he took good care not to frequent bad society, but continued to labour diligently and unweariedly, soon perceiving plainly that the Dwarfs gave him much invisible aid, so that he grew to be a wealthy man. After awhile he built for himself a fine, large house, but never tore down the Dwarfs' Nest, which remained standing for many years, until, with the faith in Dwarfs and Fairies, it also crumbled and sank into decay.

THE PRINCESS MORGANA.

MANY, many years ago there reigned over Bagdad the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, one of the wealthiest, wisest, and most powerful princes that ever sat upon the throne. He was honoured and loved indeed, not only by those of his subjects who were rich and great, but also by the meanest among them. And, besides, the Prophet had deigned to grant him wise and just men for his servants. His Grand Vizier, Abdallah, to whose hands the whole administration of affairs throughout the realm might have been safely entrusted, was such a man as is rarely to be found, just, true, and economical, who knew well how to increase his master's wealth, steadily but always honestly. Therefore the Caliph loved him like a brother, and could not pass an hour without his faithful Abdallah. They always worked together,—together they played chess, of which game they were both masters, and whenever the Caliph went out hunting, the Vizier was obliged to accompany him.

Now it was the wise custom of the Caliph to wander in disguise through the streets and bazaars of Bagdad, that he might thus inform himself concerning much which would else have been concealed from him. In these walks he often heard complaints made by his

subjects, and he investigated them closely,—always, if they were well founded, removing their cause. He often attended the sessions of the courts, to see whether the judges administered justice faithfully, without respect of persons. But it was chiefly in the silence of night that he wandered through the streets, accompanied by his Vizier, Abdallah ; and not unfrequently, at these times, he prevented thefts and mischief of various kinds, for he visited the most distant and impoverished quarters of the town, partly to prevent all such mischief, and partly to seek out the poorest of his people in their miserable hovels, and assist them with money or good advice.

Thus, one evening he, with his Grand Vizier, left his palace and wandered along the banks of the Tigris, enjoying the beauty of the starlit night. The Caliph was in good spirits, and very merry, and was talking with his companion of the various destinies of mankind,—how some were fortunate and others the reverse, and how every heart was daily filled with new hopes and aspirations of which so many were never to be realized.

“ Yes,” replied Abdallah, the Vizier, “ if one could only read in some great mirror the various wishes and thoughts of the thousands of men who toss restlessly upon their couches around us, conscious that their hopes can never be fulfilled, what a subject for contemplation we should have !”

Conversing thus the two men came to one of the poorest quarters of the city, and entered a little, crooked street, which twisted and turned here and there, and whose course the Caliph and the Vizier followed until they found themselves in a part of the city

which was entirely unknown to them. Suddenly the Caliph stood still, for he heard issuing from a little side court the lamentable shrieks of a man who was apparently undergoing a beating, or some kind of ill treatment. The Vizier, too, heard the cries, and although such a circumstance was not very unusual, there was something so strange in the steady continuance of the screams, that the two listeners with one accord walked towards the spot whence the noise proceeded. Passing through a very narrow and dirty little street, that led through a half-ruined arched gateway, they came to a little square that looked very gloomy and deserted. The houses which surrounded it were, for the most part, ruinous, and had neither doors nor windows. You could look directly into the interior of most of them, and see the grass growing a foot high in the halls and apartments which had once been the homes of human beings. The roofs, too, of most of these tenements had fallen in, and large trees, sycamores, plantains, or palms looked out over the bare walls, giving sorrowful token that these houses had been empty for two or three generations.

Only from one single house in the whole square did a feeble ray of light, penetrating through a broken window-shutter, show that some one was within. But with the friendly beam of light there also issued those cries of pain which had drawn hither the Caliph and his attendant. Although this building was also ruinous, like all the rest in the square, it must once have presented a much finer appearance than its neighbours, for it was built of stone, and over the doorway was inscribed a sentence of the Koran, a decoration only

used by people of means and rank. But even here the tooth of time had attacked and partly destroyed the walls. The stone upon which the sentence was inscribed was so defaced that the words were illegible, and the doors and shutters scarcely hung upon their hinges.

From time to time shrieks of agony were heard from within, and the two men now approached to listen to the words that accompanied them.

“Ah!” cried a voice, “give me something to eat and drink. I am dying of hunger and thirst. Am I not already worn to a skeleton? How can I pass four days and four nights without food or drink? I shall die. Oh! oh! and have I not learned to endure my hundred blows daily? So do give me something to drink, at least.”

The voice which uttered these strange words seemed to be that of a young man, but it sounded so weary and weak that it was easy to believe that he had really suffered the ill treatment of which he spoke and which had so reduced him. Then was heard another voice, that seemed to come from the lips of an older man, but it was not faint nor weary, as was the first. “Ah, sir, if you would only listen to reason, and consent to live like other mortals. Of what use are the tortures to which you subject yourself? By the beard of the Prophet, I am sorry enough to say so, but it is the duty of an old servant, like myself, and I repeat, therefore, for the thousandth time, that your actions are those of a crazy man; and that if you do not cease tormenting yourself thus, you will end your days in the mad-house. Eat and drink, and mingle again with your

fellow-men. Of what use are these dreams of yours to you?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the first in his hoarsest, weakest voice, gnashing his teeth so that the listeners outside heard it, "this is the way you serve me, you faithful servant! May Eblis fly away with your food and drink! I will starve! yes, and I will be beaten as much as I choose!"

"Just as you please," replied the other; "if you will starve to death, then, refuse all meat and drink. The Prophet knows that it is not my fault. But this I tell you, say what you will, I will not again lift a stick to beat you."

"Oh! oh!" whined the first, "faithless, dishonest knave! Did you not promise my father, on his death-bed, with his hands in yours, to cling to me and never to forsake me? and do you not know for whom I suffer all these woes? Now you would have me endure them all in vain. Is your promise forgotten? I will be beaten, and I will starve! There, take the stick, I will bear the blows patiently."

The Caliph and his Vizier, standing before the door, did not know what to make of this strange conversation,—each looked at the other with amazement, and Abdallah pushed up his turban and tweaked his nose, to convince himself that he was not dreaming this strange story. The Caliph took his companion's hand and motioned him to be silent, for the old man's voice was heard again, within, saying in piteous tones, "O Allah! Allah! would that I had died with your father! But the Prophet knows my heart. He knows that I am not to blame for this madness."

All was then quiet for awhile, until shrieks were once more heard, and a sound as though some one were being beaten with a stick,—and between the blows could sometimes be heard the words, “O love! O love! The fair image! the beautiful picture! Oh. those brilliant eyes! That raven hair! The Prophet help me!”

The Caliph could listen no longer to these strange cries. He softly requested his Vizier to observe closely the situation of the house, and together they left the dreary square, still hearing for some distance the cries of the unhappy sufferer.

The next morning the Grand Vizier took a couple of confidential servants with him, and set out to find the house in the lonely quarter of the city which the Caliph and he had seen the night before. They soon found it, and waited before it for some time, expecting to hear the same lament as before. But all was quiet and still. They knocked once, twice, at the door without hearing the slightest sound in return. Then they knocked at the closed window-shutters, and repeated this several times, until they heard a movement within. A door was opened, footsteps were heard approaching the front door, and the voice of an old man asked through a crack in the wall, who was there and what was wanted.

“Open, in the name of the Caliph!” cried Abdallah, adding, as the old man within seemed to hesitate, “Open quickly, or I shall obey my master the Caliph Haroun al Raschid’s commands, and break down the door, and you shall suffer severely for your disobedience.”

The door was slowly opened, and there appeared on the threshold the figure of an old man, very meanly clad, who, laying his hand on his breast and forehead, asked, "What are the commands of my lord the Caliph?"

Abdallah, with his two companions, entered the house, and proceeded to the room whence had issued the strange conversation on the previous evening. The old man at first attempted to bar their progress, but when he saw the armed attendants, he heaved a deep sigh and opened the door of the apartment.

Although this room was in a very poor condition, yet what remains of furniture there were showed that some man of wealth had once resided there. Broken cabinets of gilded wood stood against the walls, and from the ceiling hung an old Persian shawl, as in many of the Oriental houses. The shutters of the windows were closed, so that one could only dimly descry a divan in the corner of the room, upon which lay extended the figure of a young man. By chance a single ray of sunlight now streamed in, and enabled the Vizier to see the countenance of the youth distinctly. No one who looked upon his pale, sunken features could doubt that it was he whose shrieks had been heard on the preceding evening. He was about twenty years old, and apparently took no notice of the newcomers. His eyes were shut, his lips, shaded by a delicate black moustache, were tightly closed, and, in spite of his emaciation and pallor, his head, covered with thick, dark curls, was eminently handsome. His dress, although ragged, showed traces of better days, —and in one corner of the room, beside a pile of

immense books, lay a number of broken flasks and strange instruments, such as are used for necromancy or magic.

After the Grand Vizier had glanced hastily over the interior of the apartment, he asked the old man, who stood submissively at the door, who this youth was; whereupon the other made a sign entreating silence, and beckoned the Grand Vizier to leave the room with him.

Outside, he begged him most earnestly not to pry into his secrets. But Abdallah announced to him that the Caliph, his master, had commanded that he should be brought before him, that he might learn the meaning of the cries and conversation that he had overheard the night before.

When the old man heard that the Caliph had commanded that he should be brought before him, he fell upon his knees and swore by Allah and the Prophet that he was guiltless of any crime, and that he would, in fact, rather undergo severe punishment than live any longer in this house. "Yet," he added, "I dare not leave my young master; but if, O my lord, you compel me, innocent as I am, to go to prison, you must take care of him."

The Grand Vizier assured him that no one dreamed of punishing him, and that, if he would only tell the truth, the Caliph would order all things for the best for himself and his master. So the old man returned to the apartment where his master lay, and after exchanging a few words with him, left him, and followed the Grand Vizier, who placed a guard before the house.

When they arrived at the palace they were summoned before the Caliph instantly, for Haroun al Raschid was most anxious to learn from the lips of the servant what was the meaning of the conversation he had overheard. The old man prostrated himself before the Caliph, and said: "Commander of the Faithful, as I know well that truth alone finds favour in your sight, I will tell, without equivocation and just as it is, my young master's story, and certainly none of the Faithful have ever before had so strange a one. Know, then, O my lord, that in that house, whither Allah conducted you for our advantage yesterday evening, there lived, two years ago, Abou el Deri, a wise and learned man, of whom your Highness must certainly have heard. He could read all the mysterious books of magicians and sorcerers, and discover from the stars much concerning the past and future. I was his servant, O my lord, and in former years accompanied him upon the journeys which he made to all parts of the known world. Often have we traversed the Great Desert, and there cannot be one of the large Oases which we have not visited. The ocean, too, has borne us upon its bosom, and my master made all these journeys, not to accumulate wealth by the purchase and sale of costly merchandise, but in all the countries and cities which we visited he sought out wise and learned men, with whom he conversed concerning the knowledge of the stars, and who either gave him or received from him various kinds of information. Ah, sir, it was a pleasure indeed, to travel for days and weeks through the lonely desert with Abou el Deri. Never in my life have I known any

one who could relate such charming and entertaining stories; he would continue his relations for days, and every one listened to him with delight. But although he was often eloquent and amusing upon these journeys, there were moments when he became quiet and reserved, and these were the times when the Fata Morgana appeared on the horizon of the desert. Then he grew thoughtful and serious, and would gaze for hours upon the wondrous trees, the splendid palaces, and the sparkling waters which adorn this phantom-spectacle of the desert. I have often attempted to speak to him at such times, but he would sign to me with his hand to be silent, and then he would usually open before him on his camel and study diligently one of his mysterious books, full of strange drawings, which he seemed to compare with the figures of the Fata Morgana.

“Once, after a day spent in this manner, we were lying at evening under our tent, and Abou el Deri was more friendly than ever, wherefore, impelled by curiosity, I took heart and asked him why he gazed so fixedly and earnestly at the desert-phantom, and seemed rather to enjoy a sight which every true Mussulman regards with secret dread. Then my master laughed and said to me, ‘Listen, O Ismael,’ for so am I called, ‘thou hast long been a faithful servant to me, I will forgive, therefore, thy curiosity, nay, I will even communicate to thee—for thy understanding is good—what many wise and learned men before me have already thought of the desert-phantom, and what I myself believe it to be. Thou thyself hast often seen, especially on very hot days, when the desert lies around and far, far before us, that suddenly it is as if the sand

on the distant horizon slowly arose, and mountains appear to rise up, above whose summits the heavy, yellow clouds sail slowly hither and thither. It rolls and tosses like a distant sea, and sometimes a ray of light shines out as though the sun were throwing a single beam upon the waters through thick, black clouds. The motion of the hills increases, and the yellow clouds, which are at first massed together, roll off like a long, thin veil and slowly ascend to the skies, as though a curtain were lifted from the earth and revealed to thy dazzled and enraptured gaze a rich and lovely landscape where but a moment before there was nothing but dreary hills of sand. Around thee the sun still shines hot and glowing upon the burning sand. Silently both men and horses travel on through the heat, and entrancing indeed is the spectacle presented by the Fata Morgana, of shady groves of palm, cool, bubbling brooks, and gorgeous palaces. At sight of them the traveller draws his burnous over his head and invokes the aid of the Prophet, while he turns away his eyes from the distant vision, for not where those palm trees wave does his path lie; no, there is nothing for him there but sand and certain death.

“‘But for all this there is no evil in the Fata Morgana. It does not seek to lure men to destruction, but is as innocent as a lovely island in the ocean which the mariner cannot reach because his guiding compass is wanting. This fair island in the sand may yet be one day reached by some man of true courage, and rich will be the reward that this spot, blooming and lovely as Paradise itself, contains for him who seeks it there. Yes, Ismael,’ continued my master, ‘I know

thee to be good and wise ; it will not bewilder thy senses to learn that the Fata Morgana is more than a mere phantom, and to be told that the Princess Morgana reigns there, a woman more gloriously beautiful than any other upon earth or in heaven. It is true, no mortal man has ever beheld her countenance, although my books, as well as wise and learned men, maintain that a powerful magician once succeeded in painting a portrait of her, which has been lost now for many years, and in truth the aim of all my study and travel is to find this dangerous picture,—dangerous, because the mortal who looks upon it sickens with rapture and love.’

“Thus spoke my master, and you may imagine my amazement at what he had related, and how I shook my head to find that he was wasting so much time and money in search of a fabulous picture. Some time after this narrative we were journeying with a caravan to Damascus and Palmyra, and suffered greatly by the way. The Simoom overtook us and destroyed a large part of our caravan, and only the speed of our horses enabled us to escape the wide-spread destruction. Ah, sir, it is a fearful thing to see a caravan, men and beasts, flying in deadly terror from the terrible death that pursues them. Camels and horses seem endowed with miraculous speed, and, covered with foam, fly over the sand until they drop dead in the midst of their course. Near us in this wild flight we noticed a beautiful woman upon a noble Arabian courser ; she held her little child, born only a short time before, wrapt in her veil, and, in the universal confusion and noise that prevailed, she had eyes only for the little creature, which she covered

with her body from the rushing storm of sand. My master's heart was touched at sight of this woman, and we kept as near to her as we could, that we might assist her in case of need. But the Prophet had decreed her death. Her horse suddenly fell dead, unluckily at a moment when the storm was close behind us. Then she held her child imploringly towards us, and could only cry out to my master, 'Save, oh, save it!'

"You may imagine that in spite of the danger which threatened us we reined in our horses, while I seized the child and Abou el Deri attempted to rescue the woman. But she drew her veil over her head, and, pointing despairingly to the approaching cloud of sand, adjured us, by Allah and the Prophet, to fly and save the child. Close behind us came the sand-pillar, like a gigantic wall of fire, and curled above our heads like the lofty waves of a stormy sea when they hurry on to dash themselves upon the shore. 'Fly! fly!' screamed the woman, 'and save my child!' Whereupon our horses, who well knew the danger which threatened us, put forth anew their failing strength, and rushed wildly onwards. The cloud of sand broke and covered with a gigantic mound the body of the wretched woman.

"Through the grace of the Prophet, we escaped, and Abou el Deri considered the boy that Allah had so unexpectedly sent, as his own, and had him educated in the most careful manner. Notwithstanding this new care, he continued his travels most diligently, and the older he grew, the more determined he was to find the picture of which he had told me. Thus we both grew old, and the last journey which we made together was to an oasis far beyond Palmyra, where dwelt a most

wise and learned man. This journey was indeed our last, for here, after all his searching, my master found what he had so long desired,—the picture of the Princess Morgana. But of what use was it to him then? He stood on the brink of the grave, and no power, no time was left him to spend in an attempt at least to find that blissful island about which he had dreamed all his life long, and which had been the goal of all his hopes. We came back here to Bagdad and lived poorly and quietly, for my master's property was exhausted by his travels, and the little that he had hardly sufficed to support him until his death. At last he died, and in his dying moments I and his adopted son, a well-grown youth, stood by his bedside. For the last time he gave the young man good advice, exhorting him to fear Allah and the Prophet, and presented to him an amulet which his unfortunate mother had hung around his neck just before she perished in the desert. He then begged the young man to leave him, while he delivered to me his last directions.

“ ‘Ismael,’ he said, when we were alone, ‘in a few moments I shall be no more, and thou wilt have lost a master and my son a father. Promise me to use thy life-long experience for his good, and to give him all the assistance in thy power.’ I took his hand, and promised solemnly to do all that he asked of me, whereupon he adjured me never to look upon the picture which he handed to me, or to show it to his son; ‘for,’ he added, ‘at sight of this picture every man will gradually sicken and die of love and rapture.’ In a few minutes after he died.

“I was now alone with the young man, and Abou el

Deri had left but little behind him. Caskets and chests were empty, and the only things which we could turn into money were some old weapons adorned with gold and jewels, which I sold in the bazaars. Our young foster-son, who had received the name of Saladin, was impetuous, brave, and fiery. Abou el Deri had had him instructed by the wisest men of the age, and besides that he was learned in all book-wisdom, he could bear a lance, and manage most skilfully the wildest steed. But oh, sir, you can easily believe that all such amusements had to be resigned after my master's death. What could we do? The fiery courser that the young Saladin rode we were obliged to sell, as well as the costly apparel in which he had shone so brilliantly. Often did I attempt to procure some employment for my young master, whereby he might worthily earn his bread. I recommended him to the captain of the body-guard, entreating him to give the young man a place among his horsemen; but, as I had no powerful protector, and could not even procure a horse and the necessary outfit, I was everywhere refused. Ah, sir, that was a sad time. I tried to persuade the youthful Saladin to undertake some employment, and at last induced him to promise to accept a place as servant in some shop. But I had thus bowed his proud spirit in vain; for although every one was prepossessed by his appearance in his favour, the merchants no sooner heard that he was the son of Abou el Deri, the magician and conjurer, as they called him, than they turned from us and closed their doors against us. The money from the sale of the weapons was now exhausted, and I searched every chest and corner of the house

in vain to find some concealed treasure. I even examined the iron casket which contained the wonderful picture, in hopes of finding something else in it, but there was nothing there except the picture, enclosed in a case. I must confess that while searching here I was tortured with curiosity, and longed to press the steel button of the case that enclosed the wonderful thing. But by good luck I seemed to hear at this moment the voice of my old master calling me, and I resisted the temptation. Unfortunately, I forgot to lock the casket again, and left the house to beg a loan of an acquaintance.

“While I was away, Saladin came home, and, having often noticed the casket before, and seen that it was always locked, he made use of my absence to take out the case, and O my lord, the unhappy youth opened it and looked upon the picture.

“What happened then I do not know, but when I returned I found him wildly raving, lying upon his bed in a burning fever, holding in his hands the case, which no force could wrest from him. Too well I knew, from the wild words that he uttered in his delirium, that he had seen the picture, and that the declaration of my dying master, that any mortal who should behold it would sicken of love and rapture, was fulfilled in him, for he lay upon his bed devoured by a malignant, wasting fever, and muttering the most mysterious, unconnected phrases. He usually thought himself in the desert, beholding in the distance the phantom of the Fata Morgana. He described it, as Abou el Deri had done, in the loveliest and most glowing colours, as an island of rapture and bliss. And

in all these visions the ill-fated picture played a principal part, for it always seemed to hover before him, and his bewildered soul followed it over snow-clad hills, through raging seas, and the burning sand of the desert.

“At last the force of the fever was spent, and I hoped that reason would return to the unhappy Saladin and banish the remembrance of the picture from his heart. But no, as his body recovered, his heart and mind grew worse. The first time that, as I sat by his couch, he recognized me, after many months of patient nursing, and spoke connectedly, he showed me the case with rapture, and declared that at last he had found something to which he would consecrate his existence, and which he would either attain or die, and that was, to find the original of the picture. In vain I represented to him that the picture must be a mere fancy of the artist; he only smiled and said, in a faint voice, ‘O Ismael, your incredulity grieves me. I assure you it is the picture of the Princess Morgana, who reigns over a blissful island far in the desert. Well I know that as yet no mortal has had the good fortune to reach that island and see the Princess, yet why should not I be the one to find the way thither? Indeed, I know I shall succeed in doing so, for in the delirium of my fever I have often journeyed thither. It was in truth a wild and weary road, and the caravan to which I belonged was composed of strange figures; but, nevertheless, I shall reach the island at last,—yes, I shall see her and be near her.’

“When at first I heard him talk thus, I thought the fever had not yet left him, and that with time these strange ideas would vanish. But I was mistaken,

Saladin recovered slowly, indeed, but never forgot his purpose of seeking the Princess Morgana, as he called the picture. He had determined upon a course which bordered on madness, and by which, he said, he could accustom his body to the fearful privations that he would have to endure upon his travels. In pursuance of this determination, he took no food nor drink for days, that he might inure himself to hunger and thirst. All my remonstrances were in vain. He fell into a terrible rage whenever I represented to him the folly of his conduct, and at last he persuaded me, by his entreaties, to aid him in these follies.

“He often goes for three or four days without food, and, besides, compels me to beat him severely, that he may bid defiance to the ill treatment of those who would dissuade him from his undertaking. You may imagine what I have suffered in beholding this madness, O my lord, but what could I, a poor old man, do? for however firmly I determined to resist his will, I could not persist long in this determination, for his grief at my faithlessness, as he called it, his lamentations because I would not help him to obtain what he loved best in the world, were so heart-rending,—even more hard for me to bear than the ill treatment to which he subjected himself. If I sometimes ask him when and by whose assistance he expects to undertake his journey, he always answers that destiny, which has put into his hands the portrait of the Princess Morgana, will, when the time for the journey arrives, provide means for its accomplishment.

“This is the story, O my lord, of old Abou el Deri and his foster-son, and, by the beard of the Prophet, I

have concealed nothing. You yourselves heard last evening how he tormented me with his madness, and how I was obliged to treat him. I pray my lord to decide now in his wisdom what shall become of us."

The Caliph, as well as his Grand Vizier, had listened most attentively to this strange story, and at its close sat silent, not knowing what to think of it. "What do you say, Abdallah," said the Caliph, "to our sending for this picture and looking at it at all hazards?"

"O my lord," quickly returned Ismael, after he had made a low obeisance, "O my lord, do not in your wisdom determine upon anything so fearful. Believe me, the evil spell that is on this picture would make the rest of your life miserable."

"It is indeed a strange story," said the Grand Vizier, "and if I might give your Highness counsel which your wisdom would not reject, it would be to provide the young man with means to traverse the desert with a caravan for a year at least. Perhaps the Prophet will be gracious to him, and in that time cure him of his insanity."

"You are right," answered the Caliph. "Make the necessary preparations, and do not let the traveller want for anything. Send him away with one of the great caravans which are about going to Palmyra, and command him to return at the end of a year, and then I will provide further for him."

Ismael fell at the Caliph's feet, and, whilst he stammered his thanks for the favour shown him, ventured to prefer the request that he might accompany his young master. It was granted, and Haroun al Raschid, commanding the young man to be brought before him

when he should be ready for his journey, dismissed the old servant, who went back to his dwelling to cheer and revive his master with the news that he brought.

Saladin was lying stretched out upon his bed, and at first listened carelessly to his servant's story of having been summoned to the Caliph's presence, and of having told him of Abou el Deri's search for the portrait. But when Ismael went on to say that the Caliph had promised to fit him out and give him the means for a journey across the desert, the young man suddenly arose from his couch, and cried, with sparkling eyes, "Do you not see, Ismael, that my dreams have not lied? Do you not see that the time is at hand, for Allah sends me unhopèd-for aid? The time has indeed come for me to begin the search for which my soul longs,—upon this journey I shall find what I seek."

Early the next day there came to the young Saladin's dwelling chests packed full of handsome apparel, with weapons, and all kinds of provisions for a long journey, and the generous Caliph sent several valuable horses, as well as some black slaves, who were to accompany the young man. Saladin himself had been a changed creature from the time of Ismael's announcement of the Caliph's bounty. In a few days no one would have imagined that he had lain ill for months, subjecting himself to all kinds of privation and harsh usage. The mere thought of carrying out the darling wish of his soul had inspired him with new life,—the colour returned to his cheeks, and his eye flashed again beneath its dark lashes like the glowing sun when at evening it sinks, cloud-encompassed, below the horizon. An

hour after the old servant's return from the palace his master arose, and, when the Caliph's gifts arrived, he selected from them the handsomest and richest suit of apparel, and, accompanied by Ismael, rode upon one of the Persian horses through the streets and bazaars, to the palace of the Caliph, in order to present himself before the throne, as Haroun al Raschid had commanded.

The people in the streets through which he passed got out of his way respectfully, and were so dazzled by his stately, handsome figure and his skill in horsemanship, in short, by his whole appearance, that, standing aside, they bowed low before him as before some mighty Emir. The merchants, too, in the bazaars, regarded him with astonishment, and asked one another who the strange prince could be. Thus he arrived at the Caliph's palace, where the guards received him, with his old companion, in the most reverential manner, and without delay he was admitted to the interior court-yard. Here several pages sprang forward to hold his stirrup for him to dismount, and then led him, with his servant Ismael, to the apartments of the Caliph, who, with his Grand Vizier Abdallah, received him there.

Haroun al Raschid regarded the young man, who prostrated himself before him, with a gracious smile, and renewed the promises which he had given to the aged Ismael.

"Commander of the Faithful," replied Saladin, "you have appeared to a wretched man, in your mercy and generosity, like an angel from heaven, and the Prophet will reward you for it. How shall I express my gratitude for the boundless favour that you have

shown me? I shall find what I have so long desired, and, if Allah permits it, I shall be blest indeed."

The Caliph, who had at first entertained an idea that the youth might perhaps be cured of his fanaticism, saw clearly from these words that his intentions were fixed unalterably in his mind, and determined to waste no time in combating them. He therefore dismissed him with his best wishes, and Saladin returned to his dwelling intoxicated with joy.

The inhabitants of Bagdad, whose curiosity had been greatly excited by the appearance of the strange prince whom they supposed Saladin to be, took great pains to discover who the young man really was, and no sooner learned that he was the son of the old magician, Abou el Deri, and that the Caliph had given him the means and outfit for a long journey, than they declared that the whole story of the portrait was an utter falsehood, invented by the old rogue Ismael to extort money from the Caliph's compassion, and these envious men lamented that the old man's trick had been so successful.

A few days afterwards the caravan, joined by the young man and his servant, set out from Cairo for Palmyra, and the people in the bazaars said, laughing, to one another, "See that cunning rogue Ismael,—how he rides off with his booty."

As is commonly the case with evil-speaking, in this particular instance it increased from hour to hour, was embellished with various additional statements and surmises, and became at last so credible that even the wisest might have been imposed upon by it. The people firmly believed that the aged Ismael had deceived the Caliph. "Look you," they said to one another, "old

Abou el Deri, as we all know, never had a son. Where could Ismael have picked up this young man whom he has trained to carry out his purposes?" "It seems to me," said another, "that I have seen the young liar somewhere." "Just so," added a third. "Did we not see, a little while ago, a youth serving in the barber's shop at the great Caravanserai as like this Saladin as one egg to another?" "Aha!" chimed in all the rest, "you have hit it,—it is he. Oh the good Caliph!"

Haroun al Raschid soon heard these reports from his Grand Vizier, and, although he refused at first to credit them, he was at last persuaded by Abdallah's representations to send for the master of that same barber's shop, who replied, with a malicious smile, to the Caliph's questions concerning the young man: "Commander of the Faithful, man is erring, and the Prophet be my witness that I would not willingly say aught evil of my fellow-men. But as regards that young man, I can affirm that a few weeks ago he was employed by me to wash my barber's basin and razor. It is true that he presented a very different appearance when I saw him again, but that was owing to the costly apparel and the noble steed which your Highness presented him."

The Caliph, hard as it was for him to acknowledge to himself that he had been thus deceived, could not help crediting the words of the barber, and said afterwards to his Grand Vizier, "Hark ye, Abdallah, we must take better care for the future, and let people bawl and shriek in their houses as much as they please, without troubling ourselves about them."

Abdallah shrugged his shoulders and replied, "In deed it has proved a most rascally trick."

In the mean while the caravan to which Saladin and Ismael had joined themselves pursued its quiet way through the desert, and the two pilgrims never dreamed of the slanders heaped upon their fair fame behind their backs. The young man was rejoiced that at last he had taken the first step that was to lead him to the unknown original of his picture, and that now some lucky chance might speedily bring him to the goal of his wishes. Ismael, too, was happy to leave the dull life of the city, and to be again travelling in the well-remembered desert. He seemed to be twenty years younger, and to be once more riding by the side of his old master, Abou el Deri.

The caravan was very large, and as it carried a great amount of gold and silver was escorted by a number of armed horsemen, to protect it from the attacks of the Bedouins. In a very few days these sturdy robbers showed themselves in the distance, reconnoitring, apparently, the size and strength of the caravan, sometimes even surprising small detachments of the train who lagged behind after a night's encampment, and leading off the loaded camels, having cut down such of the men as made resistance.

The larger part of the caravan, however, and Saladin with it, pursued its way without any accident. At first the riding over the hot sand, under the glowing sun of the desert, occasioned the young man not a little inconvenience. But he soon became accustomed to it, and enjoyed all the beauty and sublimity that can be found in the quiet and solitude of this huge

waste of sand, and when the heat of the sun sometimes depressed him, he was refreshed by the thought of the Fata Morgana, which he had never seen, and to behold which he so ardently longed. At last, one beautiful evening, when the sun had blazed over the heads of the horsemen all day long with terrific heat, the phantom of the desert revealed itself from the midst of a blue mist which seemed to ascend from the distant horizon, and the last rays of the setting sun flashed gloriously upon those fabled palaces, those unattainable groves, and that shining water which gushed forth sparkling and bright and yet had never moistened human lips. Saladin sat enraptured upon his horse, his ardent gaze fixed upon the enchanting spectacle, until, growing fainter and fainter, it gradually faded entirely away.

As the two travellers were lying under their tent that night, the young man said to his servant, "Ah, Ismael, I have noted exactly the direction of the blessed island where reigns the Princess Morgana. Let us start now, and perhaps we may reach it before morning."

"By the Prophet!" replied Ismael, with a sorrowful smile. "Dear master, how strange all your projects are! Our present journey in search of the original, which probably has no existence, of a picture, is ridiculous enough. But your plan of leaving the caravan, to go wildly forth into the desert, borders on madness, and, believe me, you will never reach this phantom scene, with its fair palaces and palms and streams. For every step which seems to lead you towards it, it recedes ten steps from you."

"But," rejoined Saladin, impatiently, "how can I

attain my aims, and reach the consummation of my wishes upon which my whole future peace depends? Did you think, perhaps, that this ride through the desert would change my intentions and efface that image from my heart?"

"I hope, O my master," replied Ismael, "I hope your visions will be dissipated, and that when we return to Bagdad, at the end of a year, you will look back to these days as to some troubled dream."

Saladin shook his head mournfully and lay down to rest. Such conversations as these were often held, and, although Ismael used every exertion to bring his young master to reason, he could not succeed. Saladin carefully preserved the picture, and in many a lonely hour, opening the case, lost himself in contemplation of its loveliness. By the side of a fountain which tossed its transparent drops high into the air sat the figure of a young girl, her head thoughtfully inclined towards the earth, so that one could see only the fair, shining brow and the half-closed eyes. But, as these were beautiful enough to cause the soul of man to sicken with rapture, how incomparably exquisite must the whole face be, if the maiden should raise her head and look full at the beholder! How often did the young Saladin gaze, intoxicated with love, upon this image, praying the Prophet to work a miracle in his favour and give him one look into that glorious countenance. Rash prayer! If a part only of this lovely face had power to make him well-nigh broken-hearted, what would become of him if once the fire of that glance, more devouring than the sun at high noon, should inflame his blood?

In a few weeks the caravan reached Damascus, and after it had rested there for a few days turned towards Palmyra. Soon the travellers found themselves once more in the open desert, where they saw nothing around them save sand and sky. The rations of water for man and beast decreased daily, and the more the men were tormented by the heat the more eagerly was their gaze turned to the Fata Morgana that now, more enchantingly than at any other time, revealed every evening to their enraptured vision its fairy beauties. Saladin lay for whole hours in the shade of his tent, gazing out upon the desert, dreaming with open eyes, and imagining that through those fantastic groves he could discover the shimmer of the fountain by which the maiden sat with downcast eyes. Vain fancy! When the light of the sun faded, the fairy island faded with it, and Saladin tossed restlessly and feverishly upon his couch.

He had often determined to leave the caravan, and even his old servant, secretly at night, and, throwing himself upon his steed, to commend himself to Allah and to proceed in the direction in which the Fata Morgana had last revealed to him its fairy groves. But it always seemed as if old Ismael suspected his resolve, for he was constantly relating horrible tales of travellers who, driven by thirst, had forsaken caravans in search of the sparkling waters which the desert-phantom offered to them, but who had perished miserably in the sand. These narratives did not fail to impress the young man, although only slightly and for a very short time. But his desire and love were too great, and by-and-by his purpose became fixed to leave the caravan.

At last (it was on a beautiful night, and when the rays of the setting sun had illumined the Fata Morgana shining more brilliantly than ever in the distance) the young man stole away from his servant's side, swung himself upon his horse, and rode softly through the rows of tents out into the desert beyond. Having narrowly observed the direction in which the Fata Morgana had been seen, he gave his steed the spur, and galloped thitherwards. The stars came out brilliantly in the heavens and grew pale before the morning whitening in the east, while the young man, upon his horse, rushed towards the rising sun. The gray of night turned to violet, which, growing more and more brilliant, became dark yellow, and seemed to encompass the heavens with a golden circle, which, slowly lifting, allowed the first ray of the sun to appear, gilding the waste of sand as far as the eye could reach.

Saladin now checked his steed, gazed first at the sun, while he uttered a fervent prayer to the Prophet to guide him mercifully towards the fulfilment of his desires, and then looked back upon the plain over which he had ridden, and, seeing there nothing but a wide, sandy desert, his heart grew lighter, and he rejoiced in having made his escape from the wearisome, creeping caravan, and in being free as a bird to roam whither he would. Again he gave his steed the spur, and galloped towards the east, hoping soon to see and arrive at the Fata Morgana. The sun rose slowly and seemed to concentrate its rays upon the lonely horseman, so unendurable was the heat.

Day was again declining, when the weary steed could go no farther, wherefore Saladin dismounted, and now

for the first time he remembered with horror that he had neither provender nor water wherewith to refresh the exhausted animal after his long march. Fortunately, he found in his little provision-bag a handful of maize, which he gave him, and although he himself suffered not a little from hunger and thirst, he suddenly forgot it all at the sight of the Fata Morgana, which now slowly arose before his longing vision. But he had not approached any nearer to it than on the previous evening, and it was only his imagination that persuaded him that he saw it more distinctly than ever before. Ah, those fairy palm-groves and palaces were hovering upon the horizon as distant as ever! Thus the night wore away, and the following morning found the youth again on horseback, steadily pursuing the same phantom, that receded as steadily from his pursuit. The horse was so overcome by hunger, thirst, and fatigue that towards the evening of the second day his rider dismounted and led the poor creature after him by the bridle, for before him ascended again the desert-phantom, and, alas! no nearer than on the evening before.

When the night fell, Saladin lay down by the side of his horse, but was unable to sleep, so great were the pangs of hunger and thirst that assailed him. Hope, which had not left him, gave him, however, new strength, and in the morning he sprang up more briskly than ever, to continue his ride. But his poor steed, whom no search for happiness animated, made one or two painful attempts to get upon his legs, and then sank back upon the sand, as if conscious that his strength was exhausted.

As the young man looked at his dying steed, for the first time a doubt arose in his breast, and he thought with terror of a like fate that awaited him if he did not reach the goal of his desires. But hope, and a glance at the picture, which he carried with him, reanimated his courage anew, and, bidding a sad farewell to his faithful animal, he pursued his way on foot.

To his dismay, he found very early in the day that he journeyed much more slowly in this way, and with much more difficulty, than when he sat high in his saddle. It seemed, too, as though his limbs refused to render him their usual service, as though something deprived them of power, for, with all his exertions to proceed quickly, he could scarcely take three or four brisk steps before he fell back again into the old, wearisome, lagging pace. Alas! there were two fearful enemies of mankind,—hunger and thirst,—which assailed poor Saladin on all sides, laming his limbs and making his heart sick.

Again the sun declined in the heavens, and again the Fata Morgana, rising before him, gave him new strength and courage, for he was convinced that it was not so far off as before. Fatigue soon stretched him upon the sand, but the sleep that fell upon him was no peaceful, refreshing slumber, only a feverish stupor that closed his eyes without giving him rest.

When the sun rose the next morning, Saladin had passed four nights, since his flight from the caravan, without tasting a morsel of food or a drop of water. Any other mortal would have perished, but, thanks to the privations which he had voluntarily endured in

Bagdad, he was not only still living, but able to arise and leave the spot, although wearily enough. His walk was like the pace of the snail, and, for the first time, the loneliness and desolation of the desert seemed frightful to him. The slight doubt that had yesterday assailed him with regard to the success of his undertaking now became a certainty, and he sighed for his servant Ismael, and thought of the pain which his flight must have caused the old man.

“Ah!” he moaned, “why did I not attend to his warnings? I might then have returned happily to my home, and awaited another opportunity to seek the original of my beloved picture. I should not then have perished miserably upon this waste.”

The sun blazed down upon him, and, unable to bear its fierce heat, his worn-out body refused to carry him farther. He took out his picture, opened the case, and looked for the last time at the dear image. The maiden sat quietly as ever by the fountain, which tossed high its brilliant spray, a few drops of which would have given him new life. And once more the picture asserted its magic power over him. Hope revived anew in his soul, and he tried to rise and drag himself onwards, but his limbs refused to obey him. He sank back upon the sand, closed his eyes, and resigned himself to death.

Thus the night slowly approached, and a gentle breeze, blowing over the desert, cooled his hot cheeks and softly kissed his closed eyes. For the last time the wretched young man looked around him, and his whole previous life presented itself vividly before him. He remembered all that Abou el Deri had told him of the

wonderful way in which the Prophet had rescued him from the simoom, and he thought of the day when his foster-father had received him from the arms of his dying mother.

“Why,” sighed he, “was I rescued then, to die here upon the same sand, without having made my life of any use to myself or others? Oh, wherefore?” Saladin implored of the sky above him. But there was no one there to reply to him.

The day had now faded entirely, and with the dark night, the friendly stars, and the brilliant moon, came the poor young Saladin’s last hour. A burning fever raged in his veins, but his soul grew calmer and calmer, and involuntarily he crossed his hands upon his breast as he watched a star shoot brilliantly from its place and vanish below the horizon.

He greatly errs who does not believe that the desert, which lies so blank and waste before us, is peopled at certain times of the night by strange and mysterious beings. Only the Phantoms and Genii who make the desert their abiding-place are, in accordance with the character of the place, of a more grave and serious character than the Djinns and Afrites who nightly haunt the shores of the Nile.

In the middle of the night, when the moon is descending in the heavens, strangely-shaped mists appear and cover the brow of darkness, for the sad spirits that arise from the sand of the desert prefer a dim twilight to the bright radiance of the moon. A gentle wind breathes above the sand-hills that often lie thickly grouped around, and tosses the sand from them high into the air. But, wonderful to relate, the sand does

not fall again, but rises higher and higher, intermingling strangely. Here it grows lighter, and there darker,—taking odd, airy shapes, which combine and present the forms of men and beasts, hovering silently about. And now white, bleached bones come forth from the sand-hills and vanish among the phantoms, which put themselves in motion and form a long train. This is the spirit-caravan. All who have perished in the desert, those slain by the sword or bullet of the Bedouins, as well as those killed and buried by the simoom, come up from their graves, and range themselves in the long procession, which winds slowly through the waste, to the sound of a muffled drum. It is not good for human eye to behold the spirit-caravan, for both soul and body of him who beholds it sicken,—he must soon die, and perhaps join the ghostly train on the succeeding night. Many have seen it and told, before their death, of the ghastly spectacle, of the solemn-pacing camels, with their fixed, lifeless eyes, upon whose backs sit motionless men, with turbans flowing down over their shoulders, as in deep mourning, and with garments fluttering wildly in the wind. The dead women in the caravan sit bowed down over their horses, wrapping their long veils about their heads, as at the approach of the simoom. Sometimes he who is so unfortunate as to behold the train recognizes a friend or relative, who beckons to him, and alas for him who receives such a greeting,—his days are numbered,—may the Prophet protect him!

Thus the young Saladin lay, on this night, and wrestled with death, while strange pictures were pre-

sented to his inward eye. It seemed to him as though the case, which lay beside him on the ground, opened, and the picture of the Princess Morgana slowly ascended from it, with the green palm-grove, beneath which she sat, and the playing fountain, whose murmur the miserable man thought he could hear distinctly. He gazed fixedly at the beautiful figure, and his heart was revived anew, for she slowly raised her head, and the heavenly glance that she directed towards him shot fresh power into his limbs. But in vain! The picture faded again, and gradually vanished into thin air. Saladin lay there and listened to the beating of his heart, which, scarcely audible at first, grew louder and louder. Then it seemed to the dying man as though it were not his heart that he heard, but some sound from the far distance, which came nearer and nearer,—and he was right. He distinctly heard the sound of a drum, regularly struck, slowly approaching. The thought flashed across his mind that men might be coming to rescue him, but this hope quickly vanished, for a caravan never pursues its way at night, and the sound which he heard came ever nearer. He could already distinguish the gentle, measured tread of the camels, and the rustling and waving of the turbans and garments of the men. Wearily he opened his eyes, but closed them again with a shudder, for he saw the spirit-caravan passing close beside him. The ghostly horsemen flitted past, and he saw them all, although his eyes were closed. It seemed to him, too, that they beckoned to him, and a dead negro, who was just passing, showed his white teeth and pointed, grinning, to a riderless horse which he led by the

bridle. Multitudes of camels and horses swept by, upon which sat forms shrouded in long garments and veils, and none troubled themselves further concerning the man who lay dying upon the sand.

Then a new portion of the train appeared. There were camels heavily-laden, followed by numbers of slaves, on horseback, surrounding a woman mounted upon a noble Arabian steed. The woman wore her veil wrapped around her head, and her gaze rested upon the ground. Suddenly she began to move, raised her head, and looked around with a startled and terrified expression. Her face seemed to the young man—oh, so well known and so kindly,—but he could not remember having seen it before. It was like the melody of a song heard now for the first time since earliest boyhood. The woman fixed her eyes upon him as he lay upon the sand, and there suddenly dawned a gentle smile upon her pale, motionless countenance. Hastily she drew aside her veil, turned her horse from the train to the spot where the young man lay, and sprang down and kneeled beside him, laying her hand at the same time upon his heart and brow.

Saladin hardly knew where he was. He opened his eyes and gazed into the face of the kindly lady, who, bending over him, was regarding him with the greatest tenderness. "Yes, it is he," she said, in a low, monotonous voice, "it is my son whom the simoom has spared, and I behold him once more." At these words a delicious sensation pervaded the dying man's frame, and, horrible as the spirit-caravan had at first seemed to him, he no longer felt as lonely as before in the desert. The slaves, in the midst of whom the lady had

been riding, also turned their horses aside from the train and surrounded the young man, gazing fixedly at him. The lady next loosened a flask from her girdle, and poured into his mouth several drops, which seemed to run like liquid fire through all his veins and inspire him with new strength. He was soon able to arise, and the preceding hour seemed to him like a dream. His gaze rested upon the spirit-caravan, which was still passing by as if it had no end, and then he looked into the pale face of the lady beaming love and tenderness upon him, and for the first time in his life he uttered a name whose sweet sound had hitherto been strange to his lips. "Mother, is it thou?" he said; "art thou my mother, lost in earliest infancy, now appearing to rescue me from death?"

For answer, the lady nodded her head sadly and said, "Yes, if I may." Then she glanced suddenly after the caravan, which had now passed, and cast an inquiring look upon her companions, who were all standing motionless around her.

The negro whom Saladin had noticed, and who had grinned so significantly, turned back and came towards them. He rode a coal-black horse and led another by the bridle, which he offered to the young man, without a word.

Saladin, supported by his mother's arm, walked to the horse led by the negro and mounted it. The lady mounted hers at the same time, and the train moved on again, quickly but silently.

Although Saladin knew perfectly all that had happened to him in the last half-hour, and although he had recognized his mother in the lady who had rescued

him from death, yet these strange occurrences seemed to him like some pleasant dream. He saw the lady riding by his side, tenderly regarding him, and now and then laying her hand upon his arm. But ah ! his first impressions returned,—her hand was cold, and at her touch there went a sharp pain through his limbs ; and her face, although full of kindliness, and dear to him as the face of his mother, was nevertheless cold, lifeless, and rigid.

It seemed as though the horses and camels of the caravan moved very slowly, but in reality they sped onward with inconceivable rapidity. Scarcely could Saladin perceive a fresh row of sand-hills on the horizon, before they were reached and left behind.

After they had journeyed on for some time in this way, suddenly upon the horizon Saladin discovered gorgeous palaces, surrounded by graceful palms, which seemed to have arisen from the ground as if by magic.

All this presented a magnificent spectacle in the dark night. The palaces were lighted from within, and shone with the gayest colours. The thick groves of oranges, sycamores, and palms surrounding the buildings were also illumined with brightly-coloured rays, apparently proceeding from the many fountains which dotted the greensward, and which seemed as if their waters shot forth brilliant vari-coloured beams.

Dazzled by the brilliancy, Saladin covered his eyes with his hand at the sight of this gorgeous island in the midst of the desert, and while he asked his mother to what mighty prince those palaces belonged, a joyous presentiment shot through his soul.

“Ah, my son,” replied the lady, “these palaces belong to no powerful prince; all the grandeur that you see glittering there before us surrounds the retreat of the unhappy Princess Morgana.”

You may easily imagine what an impression these words made upon the heart of the young man, and with what sensations he beheld the island lying a few steps before him, to reach which had been his life-long desire, a desire which had well-nigh cost him his life.

“Listen, my son,” continued his mother. “What you now see before you thus enchantingly illuminated is the appearance which often rises upon the gaze of mortals in the desert, and which, on the approach of men, retreats and vanishes. It is the *Fata Morgana*,—a paradise provided by the clemency of the Prophet for those unfortunates, of whom your mother is one, who perish in the desert, whom the sand covers, and to whom is denied the burial granted to all true believers. Alas! for us it does not present the uninterrupted joy of Paradise, for as long as the sun shines in the heavens we lie motionless beneath the sands, and only when night comes do we rise from our graves and journey in countless numbers towards the east, to the realm of the Princess Morgana, where the night is spent in wild revelry.”

Saladin scarcely heard his mother’s words, for his soul hurried on before the caravan, and already hovered, filled with the wildest hopes, among those palms and orange-groves, where his eyes sought out the fountain by whose brink he should find the Princess.

The first train of the caravan had now arrived at the

island, and the quiet, motionless forms dismounted from their horses and camels and vanished among the trees and buildings in the midst of the oasis, whence a gentle but joyous music floated.

Thus every train of the caravan arrived in turn, until the one approached in which Saladin rode, who was scarcely able to sit upon his steed, so great was his impatience. And now this train also arrived, and the slaves dismounted noiselessly to hold the stirrup for their mistress and her son. The latter hastily threw himself from his horse and was about to rush quickly into the grove, when his mother seized him by the hand.

"Where are you going, my son?" she asked, anxiously; "what spurs you on thus? Ah! do not join the merry dances which my companions in misfortune are leading. Refrain from beholding them,—they are not for eyes whence the light of life still beams."

"Ah! my mother," rejoined the youth, impatiently, "what do I care for music and dancing? Something far different,—a lovely, enchanting picture drove me into the desert and would have driven me to certain death, if the Prophet had not rescued me by sending you to my relief. But now, O mother, I am near the original of this picture, so I pray you detain me no longer, for I must see her myself,—I must throw myself at the feet of the Princess Morgana!"

At the mention of this name his mother covered her face with her veil, and said, softly and sadly, "Alas! alas! my son, what has happened to thee? Who has aroused in thy breast this fearful desire to find the Princess Morgana? O my child, do not go,—do not

join these unfortunates who pass in noisy revelry the few hours nightly allowed them by the Prophet, for your wish might be granted,—you might see the Princess Morgana, and then death would immediately seal your eyes, and you too would have no rest in the grave, but be forced to mount your steed every night and follow the spirit-caravan.”

A mother’s request is a sacred thing. However strongly Saladin felt himself drawn towards the enchanted island, he could not leave his mother, who conjured him not to mingle in the wild throng of revellers. He followed her involuntarily, and she led him to a quiet spot in the oasis, whither no ray of the brilliant light penetrated, and where no note of the wild music could be heard. She conducted him here to a mossy bank, beside which a little stream gurgled, surrounded by palms and sycamores whose branches formed an arbour over the whole place.

Here the lady seated herself, and drew her son down beside her upon the bank, while she begged him to tell her everything that he knew concerning the Princess Morgana, and what had induced him to seek her.

Minutely and with the greatest enthusiasm Saladin then related his story,—told how Abou el Deri had brought him up, and how his foster-father had died and left him alone with the old Ismael. Then he spoke in ardent terms of the picture that he had found by chance, and told of the illness that had befallen him upon first beholding it, and how the longing desire to see the original—the Princess Morgana—had never since left him, but that he had been sunk in poverty and misery until the Caliph Haroun al Raschid had

fitted him out and sent him off with the caravan, which he had left, after several days, and, wandering about alone, would have died if his mother had not found and saved him.

At the last words he took from his girdle the picture and showed it to his mother, who replied, "My son, I cannot understand by what magic power this picture has been painted, for in truth these are the very features of the Princess Morgana."

"Ah! see, mother," rejoined the young man, joyfully, "see, my dreams have not lied,—I am near the goal of my desires. Therefore keep me no longer,—let me take this last step towards my happiness,—let me see her, and perhaps enjoy the bliss of awakening her love."

At these words the youth was about to start up, but his mother again drew him gently down beside her, and begged him to listen to all that she would impart to him concerning this fatally fair Princess.

"The finding of this picture, my son," said she, "is no mercy shown you by Allah and the Prophet. It is rather a great misfortune, for if you became ill at the sight of this picture only, a look from the Princess herself—who excels a thousand times this painted beauty—would surely kill you. The fire of her eye glows so powerfully that it would even warm our frozen hearts and give us life again, if the Prophet's mighty will did not send us back to our graves at the approach of dawn.

"The Princess Morgana is the daughter of a fairy, who, before the birth of her child, begged the Queen of the Fairies to grant her a favour. When she had

gained her wish she foolishly implored for her daughter such beauty that no human being could behold her without dying of rapture and love. Her request was granted, and when the Princess Morgana grew up, this fatal gift worked dreadful evil among men and spirits. For, although the latter could not die at the sight of the Princess, they were devoured by the deepest melancholy, as they could never hope for a return of love from her, for when the Queen had granted the vain fairy's foolish request she had decreed, to punish her, that only a mortal could inspire her daughter with love, and this could never happen, for all men who beheld her died immediately from the effects of her unearthly beauty. Ah! my son," concluded his mother, "thus would you die, and I could not save you."

When Saladin had heard this narrative he felt the truth of it in his heart, and, sinking into a mournful reverie, he considered whether it would be worse to pass his whole life in unsatisfied longings or to die a sudden but delicious death at the sight of his loved one.

In the mean while the night had been wearing on, and the stars began to fade in the heavens. The horses, grouped together on the sand outside of the grove, became restless, and tossed their heads and pawed the ground, for the morning wind that blew cheerily across the plain chilled them.

"My time is up," the mother said to her son, "and I must flee back to the spot where the simoom overtook and covered me. Will you follow me, my son, and wait beside my grave until another night brings us here again, or will you remain here and await my return?"

However willing the young man might have been to follow his mother, you can readily imagine that he preferred to remain at least near his beloved one, whom he promised, however, he would make no attempt to see. The lady smiled sadly, saying, "Your will may be strong, my son, but your desire to see the Princess might make you forget my words, so take my veil, shroud your face in its folds, and it will keep you from all harm."

She then pressed his hand once more and glided gently away, often looking back and motioning to him not to follow her.

Saladin had taken the veil from her hand, and, as she had requested, threw it over his head, when, to his surprise, he suddenly felt an unconquerable weariness pervade his limbs. He had to lie down upon the mossy bank, and, after striving for a few moments against the stupor which seemed creeping over him, he lay there motionless as a dead man. It was no genuine sleep that thus overpowered him, for he saw plainly everything that went on around him, and yet not as if it really took place, but as though it existed only in his thoughts. He saw how his mother went back to the caravan, how she mounted her steed and sped away, surrounded by her slaves, how their forms hovered over the sand like gray and black veils, which grew brighter in the dawn, and before long the whole train of the spirit-caravan vanished on the distant horizon. He lay there quiet, and, exhausted as he was after his night of watching, he longed for sleep, which soon came to him.

In the mean time the day broke. The sun arose in

the heavens, gilding the tops of the palms and sycamores under which Saladin slept. Although his sleep was deep, he was conscious in spite of it of a motion like that of a vessel rocked gently by the waves upon the sea. It was a sea of sand upon which he was floating, and his ship was the oasis, the phantom *Fata Morgana*, which glides daily over the sand, and like the human heart finds no rest.

Suddenly, in the midst of his sleep, it seemed to the young man that he heard a low rustling in the bushes, together with light footsteps approaching. He tried to open his eyes, and although he succeeded in doing so he did not awaken fully, as one does from healthy slumber, but found himself in the state in which he had been after his mother left him in the morning and he had drawn her veil over his head. He saw everything in a softened light. The lurid colour of the sand seemed to him a pale yellow, and he could even look into the fiery sun without being dazzled by its rays.

But who can describe his astonishment and rapture when he looked around him and perceived the form of a maiden, who, lost in thought, was wandering in the grove, and who now approached him,—his rapture, indeed, for he recognized in this enchanting, fairy-like form the Princess Morgana, just as she appeared in his picture? Her gaze, too, was directed towards the ground, and although Saladin had heard his mother's words, that the gaze of this beautiful vision was deadly, he forgot them all now, and fervently prayed the Prophet to grant him but one look from that heavenly countenance, of which he would willingly die.

The Princess had approached quite near to him, when she suddenly raised her head and started with surprise at sight of a strange youth.

Whatever Saladin had heard, or learned from his picture, of her charms was far exceeded by the reality. At the glance with which the Princess regarded him he seemed about to sicken anew. His blood coursed madly through his veins, and it was as though death alone could quench the fire kindled within him by that glance. But, thanks to his dead mother's veil, the brilliancy of the beauty which beamed forth upon him was softened as well as the dazzling fire of the sun, and he was thus saved from the fate which would have befallen any other mortal.

The Princess on her part was not a little astounded at seeing that the handsome young man lay there motionless. She departed after a few moments, not without looking back at him several times to convince herself that he was not dead, as he still did not move.

The desire to ascertain whether he were living must have haunted the Princess Morgana through the day, for Saladin saw to his great delight that she frequently came and gazed at him. And he found by the beating of his heart that the agony that had almost killed him at the first sight of the Princess was less each time that he saw her, and towards evening, when she came, he was conscious only of an accelerated throbbing in his left side, such as other men experience when they approach the objects of their affections.

The sun again sank to rest, and the night slowly drew nigh, and, when darkness reigned in the desert, the same bewildering revelry was held in the oasis as

upon the previous night. The water in the fountains and streams shone with many colours and illumined the trees and palaces with a magic brilliancy. Music sounded from afar, and Saladin instantly felt that the invisible fetters in which he had lain bound were loosened, and that he could move once more. He sprang up from his grassy couch, and his first thought was to hasten to the interior of the island, seek out the Princess Morgana, and, throwing himself at her feet, confess his passion. But he remembered in time his mother's words, and therefore determined to await her return.

He soon descried afar in the desert the spirit-caravan, as it approached, and in a few moments the ghostly horsemen thronged in, hastily left their steeds and camels, and sought the interior of the island, where reigned the riotous mirth of the preceding night. And Saladin's mother also appeared and hastened joyfully towards her son when she perceived him safe and well in the spot where she had left him. He hurriedly informed her that the Princess had appeared before him several times during the day, that his love for her had increased a thousandfold, and that on the morrow no power upon earth should withhold him from throwing himself at her feet.

"Ah! mother," he sighed, "who knows whether fate does not decree that I shall win her love and be the happiest of men? If your veil has preserved me from suddenly dying at sight of her beauty, I have also become somewhat accustomed to its beams, and to-morrow I will endeavour to behold her even though I perish in the attempt."

In vain were the prayers and entreaties of his mother. Love for the beautiful princess had become too mighty in the young man's breast. He understood perfectly that it was a question of life or death, but when his mother, upon her departure in the gray dawn, left her veil again, he accepted it indeed, but took great care not to wrap it around his head as before.

Waiting and hoping, he sat there longing for the break of day. The sun again rose high in the heavens, and, earnestly as he had longed to see the Princess, now that the wished-for time had come, he delayed and lingered minute after minute, so that some time elapsed before he sought the interior of the oasis.

How tall and stately were the trees here, and what a fresh green covered the ground! He had never seen anything like it,—the clear streams gurgled over silver sands, and the fountains cooled the air. And how beautiful were the graceful palaces and pavilions by which he passed! This must be Paradise indeed. Wherever he turned his gaze a new and enchanting prospect greeted him. Light and shade, trees and water, with stately edifices, combined to form the most delicious variety. Suddenly Saladin felt by the beating of his heart that he was approaching the object of his search. He stood still for a moment, and his breath came quick. Yes, he saw through the trees the fountain which he had gazed at so many thousand times in his picture, and by its brink sat the Princess, her head on her hand, as in the portrait.

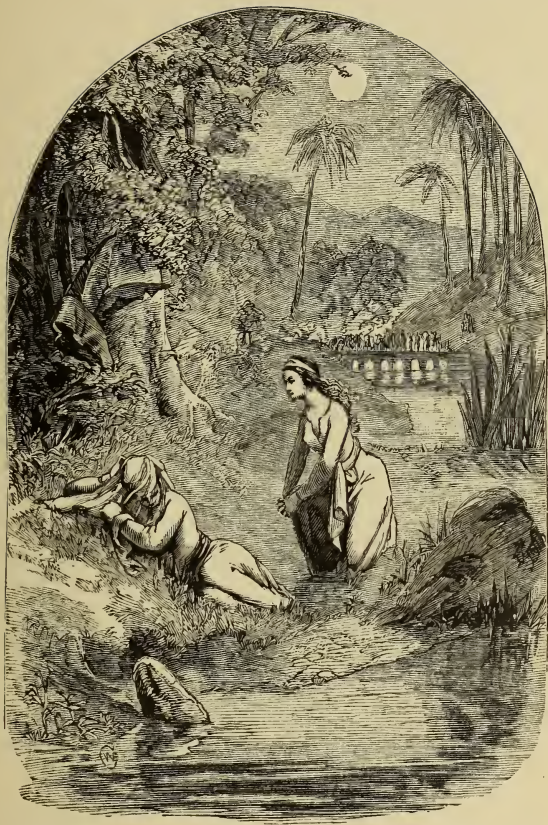
With faltering steps he drew near, and overcome either by sudden weakness or by uncontrollable love, he sank on one knee, scarcely daring to raise his eyes.

Thus he remained before her for a few moments, when the Princess raised her head and shrieked loudly, as she saw the young man kneeling at her feet. Oh! that he had had his mother's veil over his eyes to dim for a moment the full blaze of her beauty! Although he had become somewhat accustomed to it the day before, he could not bear it to-day, and sank confused and half unconscious at the feet of his loved one.

When after a few moments he returned to full consciousness and opened his eyes he saw, to his unspeakable delight, that she was bending over him, regarding him with an anxious expression. Although he closed his eyes again, he could feel plainly that, instead of the devouring flame which had before threatened his ruin, a gentle glow inspired his frame. He seized the hand of the Princess, pressed it to his heart, and stammered forth the words, "Ah! may the Prophet grant me a few more moments of existence, that I may tell you how deeply I love you!"

The Princess appeared no less rejoiced than Saladin, and, could you have seen how her eyes gazed into his, you would not have doubted that a sudden love for the young man had sprung up within her, and that the Fairy Queen's spell was broken. For although the Princess Morgana's beauty was, and continued to be, so eminent and distinguished, that nothing like it could be found in the world,—yet the devouring flame in her eyes changed, from the moment when she gave Saladin her heart, into an enlivening glow that cheered all who looked at her.

They loved each other deeply and truly, and you can easily imagine what a blissful day they passed in



“He saw, to his unspeakable delight, that she was bending over him regarding him with an anxious expression.”

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the lovely oasis. When it was gone, and the night approached, the Princess arose from her lover's side to withdraw, as she said, to her own apartments.

"O my beloved," said she, "I must inform my mother, who grieves over her daughter's fate, of the happiness that the Prophet has granted me in sending you to me. My messenger will be swift, and, although she is thousands of miles away, he will return before daybreak and bring me permission to leave this lonely oasis and go with you whithersoever you will."

After these words she withdrew herself gently from the young man's arms and vanished in the grove, whither Saladin forbore to follow her.

He awaited nightfall with impatience, that he might tell his mother of his good fortune. Before long the spirit-caravan arrived, and his mother hastened to the harbour, overjoyed to find her son again safe. But greater still was her delight when Saladin related the events of the day, and how he had been blessed by the love of the Princess Morgana. He told his mother that he should probably leave the oasis on the morrow to return, with his beloved one, to the haunts of men, and spoke of his distress in seeing her for the last time, to-day. She comforted him, begging him not to forget her, and to perform in memory of his mother the burial service accorded to all true believers, that her soul might enter in and partake of the joys of Paradise, and no longer be obliged to join the spirit-caravan every night.

Saladin promised this, with many tears, and when the dawn came his mother blessed him and calmly parted

from him. She mounted her steed and glided away with the caravan for the last time. Saladin followed her long with his eyes, while he inwardly prayed the Prophet to have mercy on her soul.

Scarcely had the rising sun crimsoned the tops of the trees and played upon the gilded roofs of the palaces, when the young man heard from the interior of the oasis a confused noise of human voices, with the neighing of horses and the unpacking of camels. He instantly arose from his mossy seat and went towards the grove. He thought at first that the spirit-caravan had returned, and his joy was all the greater when, stepping out upon an open square in the centre of the oasis, he beheld another caravan, composed of men, camels, and horses. Still greater was his delight when the Princess Morgana approached from the other side of the square, surrounded and followed by a throng of waiting-women and slaves, among whom she shone forth brighter than the moon among the stars.

She stepped up to the young man, and, giving him her hand, turned to her companions and said to them, as well as to the whole caravan, "Behold your lord!" whereupon the women waved their veils, and the men gave a joyful shout.

"Beloved," then said the Princess to Saladin, "my mother rejoices in her daughter's good fortune, and the camels laden with treasure, which you see here, she sends for my dowry. Each of them is heavily laden with gold and silver, and would alone suffice to enrich a man for life."

Then the Princess beckoned with her hand, and black slaves brought two splendid Arabian chargers,

upon one of which she mounted, while Saladin took the other. They placed themselves at the head of the train, which now proceeded into the desert. When they had left the beautiful oasis, with its fresh waving green and its clear waters, behind them, the Princess and her husband turned their horses, and both uttered a gentle farewell to the place where they had found each other and been so happy. Ah! it was an eternal farewell. For when their feet had once left this green island they might return thither never again. They beheld with surprise the oasis leave the spot where it had rested, and float farther and farther away over the sand. They soon saw it on the distant horizon, just as it is still seen by travellers on clear days. The palms tremble and wave, the waters glisten, and the outline of the Fata Morgana grows dim and blends with the sand and sky, so that one cannot say exactly where it begins and where it ends,—an image of love in the human heart.

Amid the sound of small drums and the blowing of large horns the caravan pursued its way through the desert.

Let us now return to the aged Ismael and the caravan in which Saladin had begun his journey into the desert.

When the morning dawned after the night in which Saladin had left his old servant, Ismael awakened from a deep and sound slumber. He looked around him amazed when he saw his master's couch empty, but suspected nothing at first, supposing that Saladin had left the tent early to enjoy the fresh morning. But when,

at the end of an hour, he did not return, the old man left the tent himself and noticed that his master's horse also was missing. When the train at last began its march, and Saladin had not yet appeared, Ismael became anxious, and, searching through the throng, asked if any one of the sentinels had seen the youth.

But no one knew anything of him or could relieve Ismael from his anxiety. "Ah!" thought the old man to himself, "whither can he have gone? What can have lured him into the desert, where certain death awaits him?" The thought that, in the madness of his passion, Saladin had left the caravan to wander alone in the desert, in a vain search for the original of the ill-omened picture, filled the mind of the faithful servant with distress, and when the next day and the next brought no news of him, he became convinced that his master was alone in the wilderness. How gladly would he have followed him,—but whither should he turn his footsteps? So the faithful old man had to remain with the caravan, returning sad and dejected to Damascus, where a new misfortune awaited him, for the slaves that the Caliph had presented to him, weary of serving one whom they considered their equal, decamped one morning with the remaining horses and all the money, so that nothing was left the unfortunate man but the clothes upon his back and a few pieces of gold which he had carried in his girdle.

What should he do now? His wisest course seemed to be to return with the caravan to Bagdad, for he believed sincerely that his young master, should he yet survive, would seek that city, where he might find his old servant. He therefore hired an old

camel, and after a sad and wearisome journey arrived at Bagdad.

If the people in the bazaars and streets had forgotten the evil stories that they had circulated concerning old Ismael and the young man, the return of the caravan reminded them of them again, and they asked what had become of the old rogue. With malicious satisfaction they heard that the young man had escaped from the old one, who, poor and ragged, had returned alone upon an old, shabby camel.

“Don’t you see,” cried the barber at the great Caravanserai, “don’t you see that I was right? Yes, yes, the Prophet, in his mercy, punishes sinners through their own crimes. The old fellow thought to deceive the Caliph and has been in his turn befooled by the young thief. God protect our Caliph, Haroun al Raschid! For the future he will be more prudent.”

Poor Ismael, who knew nothing of all the evil that had been said about him, was no sooner within the walls of Bagdad than he repaired to the court-yard of the palace, that he might throw himself at the feet of the Caliph, who was soon to issue from the palace on his way to the mosque.

He had not waited here long when the Grand Vizier rode through the gate on his way to his master. No sooner did the Vizier perceive the old man than, with knitted brows, he commanded the captain of the guard to take him into custody, a command which, to Ismael’s dismay, was executed on the spot. Two soldiers took him between them and thrust him into one of the dungeons of the palace, where he was left until the following day.

The unhappy Ismael, who had lately undergone so many misfortunes, received this imprisonment as a trial whereby the Prophet wished to prove him. Besides, he had no doubt that he had been mistaken for somebody else, as he was entirely unconscious of all offence. After passing the night in prison, revolving many things sadly in his mind, he was conducted, the next morning, before the Caliph, whom he found alone with his Grand Vizier, in his apartment,—but they no longer regarded him with the same friendliness as upon his first interview with the Commander of the Faithful.

Haroun al Raschid frowned as he entered, and the Grand Vizier commanded him to draw near.

“Who art thou?” began Abdallah. To this question the old man joyfully replied, “Ah, my lord, I have the honor of being already known to you,—I am Ismael, the servant of Abou el Deri.”

The poor fellow still believed that they were mistaken in his person, and that he was suffering in place of another. But what was his terror when the Vizier continued, in a wrathful voice, “How! Do you still dare insult the presence of your lord and Caliph with such falsehoods? Abou el Deri was a faithful Mussulman, and did not choose deceivers and thieves for his servants.”

“Oh, sir,” replied Ismael, “what are you saying? I am a poor old man, sorely beset by misfortune, but, by my faith in the Prophet, I have never stolen the worth of a piastre, and never spoken an untruth.”

“Listen, Ismael,” said the kind-hearted Caliph. “Your denial can avail you nothing,—rather confess your roguery, that I may show myself merciful to you.”

“What, then, can I confess?” cried the old man, throwing himself upon his knees before the Caliph.

“First,” began the Grand Vizier again, “who was the young man whom you represented as the son of Abou el Deri, and where is he now?”

“Ah, sir, the young Saladin,” replied the old man,—“he was the foster-son of Abou el Deri, but where he now is, is known only to Allah and His Prophet.”

“Do you persist, then,” rejoined the Vizier, “in your falsehoods? Then I must tell you the truth, that you may know we have discovered your tricks and have not imprisoned you unlawfully. The young rogue whom you palmed upon us as Abou el Deri’s foster-son, and upon whom my generous master, the Caliph, showered his favour in consequence of your cunning fictions, was as little the son as you were the servant of Abou el Deri. He never was even found as an infant in the desert and brought up by you, but you took him from the shop of a barber and instructed him that he might impose upon the Caliph.”

Ismael did not at first know what to say to this accusation, the last that he could have expected. As soon as he recovered from the first shock of fright he affirmed, by the beard of the Prophet, and by all else holy, that the Vizier was wrong, and that Saladin was really the son of Abou el Deri. But of what avail were his oaths and protestations? Of what avail was his minute description of his journey from the time of leaving Bagdad to the night when he lost his young master? Neither Caliph nor Grand Vizier believed him, and when he had finished, Abdallah clapped his hands and

commanded the barber of the great Caravanserai to be brought in.

The barber repeated his declaration that the young man to whom, under the name of Saladin, the Caliph had shown such favour, had been one of his assistants and had run away from him a few months before. And then he added, with a side glance at Ismael, "Commander of the Faithful, all men are liable to err, but it seems to me as if often during the time that my knavish servant was with me I have seen this old man conferring with him, probably as to the means of imposing upon your Highness's benevolence."

The Caliph heard these assertions with a gloomy brow, and when the barber had finished he said to the old man: "Hearken, Ismael, I am sorry that I have discovered you in this villany, and however I might desire to let you go unpunished, justice demands that evil deeds should not go unrewarded. But, as I will not unite accuser and judge in one person, you shall be taken before the Cadi of my city of Bagdad, and he shall pronounce sentence upon you, after a due examination of the circumstances."

Then Ismael was remanded to prison and the next day carried before the Cadi, where the barber repeated all that he had said the day before, and the supreme judge of the city of Bagdad decided that Ismael was guilty of the fault whereof he was accused—namely, of imposing upon the Caliph with vile fabrications—and sentenced him to receive five hundred blows upon the soles of his feet and be imprisoned for ten years. As a special favour, the judge reprieved him for three

days, within which time the young man might perhaps return and prove his innocence

The Caliph's clemency also revoked the five hundred blows upon the soles of his feet. But when the three days passed and no Saladin appeared, Ismael was sent to prison, and employed with thieves and murderers to row the galleys upon the Tigris and to perform similar hard labour.

To this misery the unfortunate man had been brought as much by his fidelity to his old and young master as by the rashness of the latter. He rejoiced that in the course of nature he should not thus innocently endure this severe punishment many years. For the first time now he thought gladly of his age, and looked upon death as a benefactor who would relieve him from all his woes. It pained him deeply that the good Caliph really believed him guilty, and he would willingly have endured a much more severe punishment if it would have enabled him to convince Haroun al Raschid and his Vizier of his innocence. He still cherished a faint hope that his young master might return, perhaps successful, and establish his innocence in the most satisfactory manner. But day after day and week after week passed away, and Ismael hoped and waited in vain.

It happened one morning that he was occupied with some of his fellow-prisoners in towing a great ship out to sea. The heat of the day was most oppressive, and the poor prisoners were permitted now and then to cease working and repose in the shade of the trees which grew upon the shore. Here lay Ismael, gazing out into the distance, when he saw a large and wealthy

caravan approaching the city of Bagdad from afar. At sight of the heavily-laden camels and the multitude of slaves, he was reminded vividly of the times when in just such a brilliant train he had wandered gaily through the land with his master, Abou el Deri.

In the mean time the caravan drew nearer, and Ismael, as well as the other prisoners, was obliged to confess that he had not for a long time seen so magnificent a train. The camels were all of uncommon beauty and strength, and laden in the carefulest and richest manner. The multitude of slaves seemed countless, all riding powerful and beautiful horses, and their apparel was so splendid that they might have been taken for the masters of the train, if the owners themselves, as they rode in the midst of the procession, had not attracted all eyes by the splendour of their garments and the beauty of their horses. Here too could be seen a great number of female slaves, all surrounding a beautiful lady, and the brightness of their gold-embroidered dresses and veils was so great that the eye could scarcely bear it.

Ismael turned away his head and went sighing to his hard labour, while the caravan with great pomp entered Bagdad.

Although the poor slave had often before seen caravans pass by, none had ever excited his imagination as this had done, and when after weary hours of labour he was permitted, with his fellow-prisoners, to rest on the shores of the Tigris, he employed himself in building the most lovely castles in the air, thinking,—“Oh! if my young master would only return with such a splendid train and release me,—if he would only pre-

sent himself before the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, leading by the hand the beautiful Princess Morgana—a living witness that I have spoken the truth,—and asking what had become of his faithful servant Ismael.”

Such were his thoughts while he ate his coarse fare, when suddenly the overseer of the prisoners, accompanied by two slaves, came riding hastily up, and commanded the old man to follow him.

Ismael, fearing at first that the Cadi of Bagdad had again sentenced him to receive the five hundred lashes, for he could think of no other reason why they should send for such a poor old man, accompanied the overseer to his dwelling with a sad heart, and was not a little surprised when, upon his arrival there, his old clothes were taken from him and he was provided with a good caftan and a clean turban. To his questions the only reply of the overseer was that he had orders to take him immediately before the Caliph. This intelligence the old man received with joy, for what could the generous Caliph want him for except to show him mercy! “Perhaps,” he thought, “my innocence is made clear, or it may be my young master has returned.” But he could not dwell upon this last thought,—it was too great and bewildering.

When they arrived at the palace of the Caliph, Ismael was conducted to an antechamber, where the Grand Vizier himself came towards him, and gave him his hand, saying, in a voice full of emotion, “Ismael, in our blindness we have done you great injustice, but the Prophet, who has brought your innocence to light, will reward you richly. Follow me to the Caliph.”

Trembling with delight, the faithful old servant fol-

lowed the Vizier into the next apartment. Here he remained standing at the door, with his eyes cast down, not daring to look in the face of Haroun al Raschid. But when the Commander of the Faithful called him by name in a friendly tone, he looked up, and who shall describe his joy when he perceived his young master, whom he had so long thought dead, and who now, springing forward, fell weeping upon his neck?

The old man was quite overcome when Saladin related his adventures to him, and then, taking him by the hand, presented him to his wife, the Princess Morgana. The narrative was so wonderful, and the beauty of the princess so dazzling, that all things grew dark before Ismael's eyes, and he was obliged to lean upon a divan lest he should fall upon the ground.

Now there was rejoicing everywhere. The young Saladin built himself a splendid palace upon the banks of the Tigris, and lived there with his beautiful wife and his faithful servants, greatly beloved by every one for his generosity and kindness of heart, and highly honoured by the Caliph for his nobility of disposition and his various good qualities.

And as by Ismael's release a place was left vacant among the imprisoned criminals, the Caliph ordered that it should be filled by the malicious barber, who received the five hundred blows upon the soles of his feet that had at first been awarded to the faithful servant.

CASTLE SILENCE.

IN those old times whence most of our beautiful legends and stories have come down to us, the wide-spreading fields upon both banks of the Neckar were not, as in these days, waving with grain and blossoming with fruits and flowers. The hills were covered with dark and almost impenetrable forests, and were only here and there crowned with the grim, frowning battlements of some castle, whose walls are still standing perhaps, a monument of former years. But these gloomy piles whose towers and windows are now wreathed with graceful ivy, once resounded with the bustle and noise of an existence far different from any that we are nowadays acquainted with. Instead of the merry song of the vine-tender or the rattle of wagons driven to the fields to return laden with golden grain, the man-at-arms, clad in steel, looked abroad from those battlements, and heard only at times the rustle of a herd of deer in the thicket below or the blow of the axe levelling some mighty monarch of the forest. The Neckar, flowing clearly then as now among the surrounding mountains, saw no busy cities and happy villages upon its banks, bounded by meadows and clothed with long grass, through which might be traced the paths worn by the deer that came down to the river to drink.

About a mile from the river was a beautiful valley, shut in by protecting mountains, where a solemn

and yet attractive solitude reigned,—a quiet, peaceful vale, retired enough to escape the notice of the traveller journeying along the highways, and yet extensive enough to afford those who should dwell there an ample and refreshing variety of wood and field, meadow, brook, and glen, for it was abundantly watered by crystal streams from the encircling mountains.

From these mountains, ascending gently from the valley, there was a wide prospect over the country around; the winding course of the Neckar could be traced among the forests beneath until it was lost in the distant hills, which were overtopped by the lofty range bounding the horizon. But those who most enjoyed this beautiful prospect would have been glad to descend again into the valley, for it was far more beautiful than any other in the land. Even the deer of the forest bore witness to its beauty. Although the shade of the lofty oaks upon the mountains might tempt them to wander thither during the day, they always returned to the valley, as to a peaceful home, at the approach of evening.

Yet, in spite of all the gifts lavished by nature upon this fair spot, it was uninhabited by any human being,—nay, it was actually avoided by every dweller in the country around. When the huntsmen and pages from the castles in its neighbourhood, in the ardour of the chase, pursued their game to the borders of this lovely valley, they never followed their wished-for prize within its limits, but let it escape unmolested. Sometimes, indeed, the younger and more inexperienced of the train would follow with longing eyes

the bounding stag, and attempt to pursue it,—but they were always restrained by the older and wiser hunters, who would relate to them, if they had never heard it, the old legend which, handed down among the people for many years, had caused the valley to be avoided with horror by all, and the least intrusion upon it to be regarded as foolhardy in the extreme.

These old vassals and foresters had heard from their parents, and could tell from their own experience, of some few people who, actuated by curiosity, had descended into this valley, but had never returned. They had, indeed, been seen wandering about below there, and had even approached quite near the woodmen at work on the surrounding heights, but in no instance had they recrossed the exact boundary of the valley, and to questions addressed to them they replied only by a mournful shake of the head, while they pointed, as though dumb, to their lips.

When some old hunter, in the mid-day rest, under one of the spreading oaks that crowned the hills around, had recounted such a tale, he would lead his youthful auditors to a spot where the forest was less dense than elsewhere, and bid them look down. And when they did so, they saw, to their astonishment, a stately castle, whose exterior was in such excellent preservation that one might believe it to be inhabited. The windows shone in the sunlight, the drawbridges were down, the walls were without flaw and strongly built, and even the weathercocks upon the turrets looked as if they had lately been placed there.

But a dreary quiet reigned within these walls and in

the surrounding park. The water in the lake looked like painted water, the leaves of the trees did not rustle, and none of the birds flying around uttered a single note.

And the same mysterious silence pervaded the whole valley. The deer made no sound. No song of bird was ever heard within its borders. Everything was quiet and still. No one was ever seen to issue from the castle to connect it with the outside world. And therefore the foresters and woodmen from the neighbouring castles, who sometimes passed by and looked down into the valley, in going to and from their daily avocations, had from time immemorial given it the name of "Castle Silence."

And there was an old legend among the people regarding both castle and valley. According to this story, hundreds of years ago there lived here a powerful king, who had a wondrously lovely daughter. But the maiden had made the strangest vow. She had sworn never to marry any one who would survive her, that is, who would not promise, if she died first, to be buried alive in the same grave with her. On account of her vow, which was well known in all the country around, no one dared to sue for the hand of the princess, and with deep chagrin she saw that time would bring waning charms, but no lover enthusiastic enough to fulfil the condition which she imposed upon her husband.

It happened, however, that the son of a neighbouring king saw her one day, and became so madly in love with her that he cared for nothing in the world beside. He besought her hand of the king, her father, who answered his suit with "Whoever mar-

ries my daughter must not fear being buried alive," and then reminded him of the vow that the princess had made. But the young man's love was so strong that he despised all danger, and instantly promised all that was required of him. So the marriage was celebrated with great pomp and magnificence.

The pair lived contented and happy for awhile together, when suddenly the princess fell ill,—so ill that no skill availed to cure her, and she died. And when she lay dead the young prince remembered with horror the promise that he had given, and that he must actually be buried alive. The old king, fearing that his son-in-law might try to escape the fulfilment of his promise, placed guards about the gates of the palace, and declared to the young man that he must do what he had sworn.

When the day came upon which the corpse was laid in the royal tomb, the prince also descended into it, and the door of the vault was locked and bolted. Beside the coffin was placed a table, and upon it four loaves of bread and four bottles of wine,—when these were consumed the wretched prince must starve to death. There he sat by the open coffin, plunged in woe and horror, eating only a small piece of bread and drinking only a mouthful of wine daily, pondering upon his fast approaching end.

Sitting thus, it happened one day that he saw a snake creep forth out of a corner of the vault, and glide up to the coffin. Thinking that the snake wished to injure the dead princess, he drew his sword and cut the reptile into four pieces, crying out, "As

long as I live thou shalt not touch her." After awhile he saw a second snake creep from the corner, which, seeing the other lie mangled and dead upon the ground, crept quickly back again, and brought out three silver rings in its mouth. It then took the four pieces of the dead snake, and, fitting them together as in life, drew over each wound one of the rings. Soon the mangled snake moved again and came to life, when they both glided swiftly away. But the hole through which they had entered was scarcely large enough for their bodies,—in returning, the resuscitated serpent slipped off the three rings and left them lying upon the ground behind him.

The prince, who had observed all this with the greatest astonishment, thought, "What wondrous properties must these rings possess! Why can they not restore a human being to life as well as a snake?" He picked up the rings and laid them, one upon the mouth and one upon each eye of his dead wife. Soon the blood began to stir within her and mounted into her face, flushing her pale cheeks, and then, to the unbounded joy of the prince, she opened her eyes and cried, "Ah! Heaven! where am I?" "With me, dearest wife," replied the enraptured husband. And then he gave her bread and wine to strengthen her, and told her what had happened, and how he had restored her to life. The princess arose, and the prince knocked so loudly at the door of the vault that the guards stationed there heard him and went and told the king, who came himself and opened the door. What was his surprise and joy to find his children standing there, safe and well! He conducted them forth with rejoicing

that this great trial had been so happily concluded. The young prince strung the three rings carefully upon a riband and hung them around his own neck.

But it seemed as though the heart of the princess, which had formerly been faithful and true, had become changed and corrupt since she had been recalled to life by means of the serpent rings, for after a short time she conceived a violent passion for one of the knights of her father's court, and together they plotted to deprive the young prince of life. With this aim the princess induced her husband to hunt with her one day in the darkest and loneliest recesses of the forest, when she left him, as if by accident, having stationed assassins in his path who were to fall upon him and put him to death. But, although his assailants were numerous, the prince, through the power of the rings, was endowed with such wonderful strength that he overcame and slew them all, and returned to his wife unhurt. And, when he told her of what had happened to him, and she pretended to be overjoyed at his escape from the murderous assaults of the assassins, he imprudently confided to her that as long as the rings were in his possession no harm could befall him. The wicked woman therefore, when the old king was absent from home one day, prepared a sleeping draught for her husband, and invited him to take a sail with her upon the deep lake spread out in front of the palace. Scarcely were the prince and princess, with the knight, her lover, seated in the skiff, when the prince fell into a deep sleep. The princess then took a pair of scissors and cut the silken riband upon which the rings were strung, that she might take them from her husband's

neck. But her hands trembled so that the rings slipped through her fingers and sank into the deep lake. At the same moment the wicked knight fell upon the unfortunate prince and threw him from the boat into the water, beneath which he disappeared and was seen no more. But scarcely was the ghastly deed accomplished when all the bewildering enchantment seemed to fall away from the princess,—she loathed herself for her wickedness, and threw herself upon her knees in utter despair. And when she returned to the palace she hastened to the king, her father, and confessed her crime. And the old king said, “If thou hast done this, there is no hope for thee. Thy husband would have died for thee, and thou hast murdered him in his sleep. Thou shalt be rewarded according to thy deserts.” They carried her out upon the lake and threw her into it, where she perished miserably. The old king, her father, died of grief and shame at the end of three days. But before he died he cursed the castle, and the valley in which it stood, because of his daughter’s crime, and placed it under a spell so that neither content nor joy should again abide there until the spell should be broken.

Thus ran the old legend, and it was rumoured beside that in the middle of the lake, where the poor prince disappeared, a plant with black leaves bordered with blood-red had grown up from the water, and that upon that water was sometimes to be seen a black swan, under which form the princess was condemned to repent her cruel crime until the spell should be broken. But how this was to be done no one knew.

All this had happened long, long ago, and no one

seemed to know very well whether valley and Castle Silence belonged now to any one. No one troubled himself about it any longer, and, as the banks of the Neckar were but thinly peopled, the valley was almost forgotten. The roads which led to it were overgrown with grass and underbrush, and huge trees grew there whose strong branches, interwoven, formed barriers, like iron gratings, to all the entrances to it.

And yet a certain person was living to whom Castle Silence belonged of rightful inheritance. But he had never troubled himself to inquire about this portion of his estate, and, even when he did so, the account which he received did not tempt him to visit his neglected possessions. If he had been some old worn-out lord who had drunk the cup of life's enjoyment to the very dregs, and who, weary of the routine of a court, longed for some solitude where nothing might remind him of his early folly and frivolity, he might perhaps have visited his estate here and passed the remainder of his days in the silent valley. But, as it happened, the lord and master of the estate was a chivalrous young count, who lived in his stronghold upon the Danube, where he spent day after day in all kinds of games and tourneys, and who hated nothing worse than solitude and silence. In his gay talk with his friends, in the chase or amid flowing wine-cups, the conversation often turned upon Castle Silence, and the young lords did not fail to expend their wit upon so fruitful a topic. But, although they did not perhaps give entire credence to the tales concerning the Castle and valley, yet in those days so much faith was placed in magic and enchantment that none of those gay

young fellows would venture to brave such a horrible fate as silence during the rest of their lives.

Count Raymond, as the lord of Castle Silence was called, much preferred, when once he felt that he needed change of air, to ride to the court of a neighbouring king, of whom 'twas said that not only did he possess three wondrously beautiful daughters to adorn his court, but also that it was a rendezvous for all the brave and noble knights in the world. So Count Raymond, whose father had left him heir to many a chest of broad gold pieces, fitted out himself and his train most magnificently for the journey. Every one was gay with silk, velvet, and gold,—you could not have borne to look at the count's breast-plate when the sun shone upon it, such dazzling rays shot from the gold workmanship upon its polished steel surface. The bridles of the horses were studded with precious stones, the stirrups and bits were of gold, and the trumpets of the heralds who surrounded the standard-bearer were of pure silver.

One fine morning the count and his train approached the royal palace, gazed at and admired by all the lords and nobles assembled there, who were many in number and brilliant in array, for the king was celebrating the marriage of his two elder daughters to two neighbouring princes, and had instituted a variety of unrivalled entertainments upon the occasion.

When Count Raymond entered the royal hall the king was seated upon his throne, surrounded by the entire splendour of his court, to receive his guests. On either side of him sat his two elder daughters, and, somewhat in the background, the youngest, who in her

maidenly reserve shunned the admiring gaze of the knights present.

That this young princess was still unmarried was not owing to a scarcity of wooers, for the throng of her lovers was great, and in truth a lovelier and more attractive vision could scarcely have been imagined. The heart and mind of the maiden perfectly accorded with her exterior, and her virtues and good qualities charmed all around her. Wherever she appeared, all contention ceased. The hands of the rough knights, which, in the heat of some sudden quarrel, were laid upon the hilts of their swords, unclosed and were placed tenderly upon their beating hearts, at sight of the princess. Every face brightened and all shade of sullenness vanished like dark storm-clouds when the sun's rays shine forth. Therefore this princess was dearer to her father than all else in the world beside, and he was glad to find a reason in the multitude of her wooers for keeping his daughter to himself,—for he declared that he could not offend so many, as he should, by resigning her to one. And in truth the loss of this daughter would have been irreparable, for no one could cheer him in his gloomy moments as she could with her winning smile alone. The royal attendants maintained that her lovely smile and the gentle words that accompanied it affected the king even in his sleep, and chased away the painful dreams to which his majesty was subject during his noonday nap, for when he was tossing feverishly upon his silken couch the princess would bend over him and, pressing a soft kiss upon his brow, whisper to him gently, and the troubled expression caused by his dreams would pass

away from his countenance and he would sink into a peaceful slumber.

But we must return to the audience-hall, where the heralds sounded their silver trumpets in stately flourishes every time that the master of ceremonies announced a new title, whose possessor, in rich and shining array, made a low obeisance as he passed by the throne to be lost in the crowd surrounding the king and princesses, to whom, and especially to the youngest, these presentations seemed very tedious. She saw a hundred knights enter the hall, without paying any attention except to observe whether the colours of the apparel of one were well chosen, or to remember what a fall another had had upon the sand at the last tourney. She regarded them all with the same kindliness, and did not appear even to observe the fiery glances cast upon her by the rich dukes and princes from the neighbourhood. She certainly gazed with as unembarrassed an air at each young knight who had donned his gayest doublet in her honour as upon any old lord whose long gray beard she had played with while yet a child in the nurse's arms.

But now the trumpets and bugles sounded anew, and strange colours appeared at the entrance to the hall. It was Count Raymond, with his retinue. Brilliant as the day, tall and graceful as the young fir on the mountain, he strode up the hall, attracting the gaze of all. He bent his knee before the king, and begged permission to break a lance in honour of the newly married couples, at the approaching tourney and the riding at the ring. The king welcomed him most graciously, and the count, as he rose from his knee, proudly con-

scious of his arm of steel, looked keenly through the knightly circle in search of some powerful form upon which to prove his prowess. But, although he began this search with a bold and somewhat defiant air, his gaze had travelled but half around the circle surrounding the king, when his glance lost its steadfastness and his commanding features wore an expression of the deepest submission. He had seen the princess, who in her turn gazed upon him with admiring surprise, and for the first time in her life returned the greeting of a man with embarrassment and a faint blush. It was a great moment for both, and if the lady in waiting had not been quite as inexperienced as her mistress, she would have known well enough why, when the latter sought her apartments, at the close of the audience, she was so preoccupied in mind and replied so at random to the simplest questions.

The poor count was in a still worse condition. The light that he had seen in the beautiful eyes of the princess had changed his whole manner of thought and feeling. He awakened as from a long dream,—the shining sun just arisen in his heart seemed to banish the mists which had hitherto veiled all his aims and pursuits in life. He thought with sorrow and shame of the many precious hours that he had wasted in the chase or among roystering companions. His arms and his steed were now valued by him only because he hoped through them to win greater honour than ever before, and by the conquest of every opponent to attract the notice of the princess. And success crowned his efforts. His love nerved his already powerful arm, and there was no tourney held at the royal court in which

Count Raymond did not win the prize of victory. Almost every knight engaged could bear witness to the strength of his arm, for in these mimic fights a noble rage took possession of him, and all whom his spear touched were hurled to the ground. If the festivities had lasted many days longer the palace would have been a perfect hospital, and few knights would have been in a condition to join the torch-dance on the last day.

But, in spite of all these heroic deeds, Count Raymond had never been so utterly vanquished as now. The fetters which bound him were strong indeed, and wrung from him many a bitter sigh. Ah! it was only in the tourney that our brave count was a hero. When he returned to his apartment and took off his heavy armour, he sank down upon his couch, sighing and sending many a longing glance to the opposite windows of the royal castle, behind which was his life, his sun. And the princess, too, gazed far oftener from her windows than had been her wont, and for a long time her attendants could not understand what their mistress found so attractive in the old walls opposite these windows. She was strangely altered, too, and no longer looked upon all around her with her former unembarrassed air, but sat sometimes for a long while with her eyes cast down, buried in thought, blushing when Count Raymond entered the room where she was, and growing pale when he was spoken of,—in short, the princess was in love.

At first the pair had no one to whom they could confide their woes. This penalty all high in rank must pay. Even when, in some lonely hour, the count inter-

preted to his advantage a look, a smile, of the princess, the next would overthrow all his air-castles,—he could not believe in the happiness of being beloved by her,—he was the most wretched of mortals. And although in one way the princess was happier than he,—for she could not fail to see in Raymond's air and manner what he felt for her,—yet she was unhappier in another way, for she had to keep the strictest watch over every word and action, lest in some unguarded moment she should betray the state of her loving heart to her father and sisters, or to the count himself.

Raymond, however, had one confidential friend at the court,—a true and faithful knight, who had made several pilgrimages to the Holy Land. To him one fine morning the count told the whole story of his love. At first his friend was startled at the thought of his temerity in raising his eyes to the king's daughter, but, as he knew how unruly and unbidden a guest is love, he promised the count all the aid in his power, and soon found means to discover that the princess had enshrined his friend's image in her heart of hearts. This knowledge, in the possession of which Count Raymond was at first almost beside himself, removed many an obstacle to the meeting of the lovers, and in a short time they saw each other, freed from the presence of the whole court. The count threw himself at the princess's feet and swore that he could not live without her, and amid sighs and tears she gave him her hand, and in secret accepted him for her own true knight. And yet not much was gained by all this, for, although in moments of visionary and enthusiastic hope the count dreamed that some day the king would consent to his marriage with his

youngest and best-loved daughter, cooler consideration told him how vain were such dreams, and the two lovers admitted to each other that they stood on the brink of a yawning abyss which neither could devise means to fill up or bridge across.

And so indeed they stood. No sooner did the king hear, from those busy tongues belonging to the prying eyes and ears found at every court, that an understanding of some sort existed between his daughter and Count Raymond, than he became very angry, and sent for the princess to talk with her alone. He found that the case was much worse than he had feared, and that his daughter was actually wavering between love for her father and the faith she had plighted to the count. As a union of the lovers was the last thing thought of by the king in his surprise, he merely observed to the count, in an interview that he immediately had with him, that his distant estates must be suffering from the prolonged absence of their lord, and Raymond, perfectly understanding this hint, and shocked and heart-broken, sorrowfully took his leave, recommending himself to the future grace of the king.

One can easily imagine the emotions with which the count returned to his apartments after this interview, and informed his friend of the death-blow that had been given to his hopes. His pride would not allow him to stay one day longer at court, and the worst was that he had no opportunity of again seeing the princess alone. He left for her his farewell and a renewal of his vows of constancy with his faithful friend, and only by the colours of his dress and scarf could he express

his feelings to his beloved, as she gazed after him from her windows.

So the next morning he departed, the bugles of his heralds mournfully sounding the air: "There's rest in the grave," and the handsome count, who had arrived at court in such brilliant array, was now clad in coal-black armour, with a sky-blue scarf bound across his breast in token of unswerving constancy.

How much his thoughts—yes, even his very heart had changed since he left his gay castle on the Danube! Sad as his present existence was, it seemed infinitely preferable to him to the shallow and empty life he had formerly passed in the midst of his gay, riotous companions. The image enshrined in his breast, although veiled in mourning, was yet illumined by a faint hope, and occupied his thoughts so entirely and so deliciously that it left no room for anything else. When he had returned from former expeditions he had thought with pleasure of his stately castle, and had rejoiced in the prospect of again seeing his men and horses—and even his faithful dogs; but now he felt a distaste for all these things and for the boisterous welcome of his friends, and would far rather have been left to pursue his reveries undisturbed. Whilst, buried in these thoughts, he pursued his way with his head sunk on his breast and his horse's bridle hanging loosely, his mind suddenly recurred to his desolate, lonely estate,—Castle Silence. He recalled all the stories that he had heard concerning the castle and the surrounding valley in its quiet beauty, and decided that there could be no more fitting retreat for him in his present melancholy condition. He immediately turned

his horse's head thitherward, and, followed by his wondering train, who could not imagine why their master should thus lead them towards an unknown part of the country, arrived, at the end of three days, on the banks of the Neckar, where he communicated his resolution to his followers.

At first the startled train attempted to dissuade their lord from rashly entering that accursed valley, the tale of whose lonely horrors had been handed down from father to son for so many generations. But when the count held fast to his intention, and gave all those who did not wish to follow him free permission to leave him and go home, not one of all the retinue was willing to desert his master, but vowed to follow him to the death, if he desired it.

After the troop had rested for awhile on the banks of the Neckar, the count dispatched one of his squires to a watch-tower not very far distant, in search of some one who could guide them to the valley and Castle Silence. At first the inmates of the tower crossed themselves when they heard the squire's request, but when they learned that he was sent by the rightful lord of Castle Silence, they gave him one of their men, who rode on in front of the count. Soon the bold train saw before them a chain of mountains, which their guide said were the heights surrounding the silent valley. Then, giving them instructions as to the direction in which they could find an entrance to it, he took leave of the count and galloped away towards his home in great haste.

Count Raymond, who was far too deeply occupied with thoughts of his distant lady-love to think of any

dangerous adventures that might await him behind those mountains, quietly ascended the heights. His train followed him, it is true, but one could see by the movements that were made here and there that the repose that filled the breast of their lord was far from the minds of his retinue. One fastened his steel cap tighter under his chin, another loosened his sword in its sheath, while a third sat more erect in his saddle and seized his halberd with a firmer grasp. Thus they reached the summit of the mountain barrier, and saw before them an arched pathway which led down into the valley, but which presented a most neglected appearance. The oaks and beeches which grew on either side of it had so interlaced their branches that the count wondered at first whether he should be able to penetrate them on horseback. But as soon as he made the attempt the branches seemed to part of themselves, leaving the pathway clear, so that his train followed him through it easily.

They rode on silently—down, down—until, leaving the forest that covered the mountains, they stepped out upon a fresh, green meadow, intersected by clear, sparkling brooks, and saw before them a stately castle. Fear lest they should encounter some strange horror, as well as the mysterious silence that pervaded the whole valley, had hitherto tied the tongues of the men,—not one had dared to open his lips. But now, when they saw before them the massive walls of a castle, courage returned, and the trumpeters put their instruments to their lips to announce their coming by a joyous blast. But, oh, horror! although they were masters of their art, and exerted all their force, they could not bring

forth a single note. Again they put forth their strength, puffing out their cheeks until they grew blue in the face, but all in vain,—no sound broke upon the horrible silence around. In terrified amazement each turned to his neighbour to express his wonder, but a new dread fell upon all, for no one could utter a word,—all were dumb!

Count Raymond, who was riding some distance ahead, turned his horse, that he might survey the lovely landscape, when he became aware of the confusion and terror of his train. In attempting to inquire the cause, he learned it without receiving any answer, for his lips refused to utter a sound. Not much enlivened by this discovery, he looked back and saw how the last of his attendants, hoping to escape from the valley, attempted in vain to retrace his steps,—the interlaced boughs, which had afforded so free an ingress, now grew together more thickly and obstinately than ever, making a passage through them impossible, and cutting off all hope of retreat.

Thus imprisoned, the count, with a shake of the head, rode towards the castle, and, followed by the horror-struck train, through the high, arched gateway into the court-yard. Here everything was arranged in the best possible manner and in perfect order; and, although the attendants and squires looked timidly round, expecting some new and alarming adventure, everything was so natural and well ordered that, after a short deliberation, they unsaddled their horses and led them to the spacious stables.

The count, followed by his equerry, ascended the wide staircase, and passing through a long hall, adorned

with a collection of huge antlers, came to a suite of rooms furnished gorgeously, although in rather antiquated style. In one of these, the windows of which looked out upon an extensive but neglected park, the count took off his armour, choosing this place for his bedroom. His attendants explored the lower stories of the castle, and became quite contented and easy in their minds when they found everything so habitable and convenient, especially as they discovered a well-filled pantry, adjoining a spacious kitchen, stocked with all kinds of cooking-utensils, although these last were antiquated enough in form and fashion. Their satisfaction, however, increased greatly when they came to an open cellar-door, through which, down a flight of stone steps, they entered a spacious vault, where, in symmetrical rows, a number of large and small wine casks were arranged.

As the whole retinue was thus destitute of nothing in Castle Silence to make life comfortable, except the power of speech, they soon reconciled themselves to circumstances, and in a short time learned to express their thoughts and wishes as perfectly by pantomime as though they had been accustomed to this mode of intercourse from earliest youth. And the count, too, soon felt at home in his quiet place of exile. For no blast of hunting-horn, no shout of vassals or baying of hounds, disturbed his thoughts of his distant lady-love, who occupied his mind entirely. He laid aside his arms, and, with his followers, busied himself in the castle park, which, under his care, soon became a perfect scene of delight. It seemed as though the spell under which castle and valley had so long

lain had produced an excellent effect upon all trees and plants growing there, for with very little trouble the most beautiful results ensued and the rarest flowers flourished. The castle, with its park and terraces, looked in a short time like a luxuriant parterre, and was so lovely that the count longed for nothing, save the original of the image that filled his breast. His great grief was that he could not obtain the slightest news of his beloved one. He had often attempted to send one of his confidential servants to the court of the king for tidings of her, but the evil spell upon the valley forbade all egress from its precincts, and his messenger was always obliged to return to the castle entirely unsuccessful.

One day our count was sitting in the park among his flowers, communing with them as with his distant love. The snowy velvet petal of the lily reminded him of her fair brow; the modest violet looked lovingly at him from its depths of blue, as her dear eyes had done in former happy hours; and when the sweet breath of the opening rose was wafted towards him, he seemed to perceive in the perfumed air a soft, wistful whisper that came like a greeting to him from his idol. Thus he sat, buried in dreamy reveries, when one of the snow-white doves, which he had often noticed flying around the castle, perched upon his shoulder and laid its head against his cheek. He stroked the pretty creature caressingly, when suddenly he perceived around its neck a little golden ring. With trembling hands he examined it closely, almost expecting that Noah's messenger had brought him also a leaf of hope. But he found nothing except a little hook attached to the ring.

to which a letter might be suspended, and by which, the instant he discovered it, he resolved to make one more attempt, to assure his beloved one of his unalterable constancy. This project he carried out upon the spot. He wrote a few lines to the princess, telling her of his present stay in Castle Silence, and bewailing his fate in being separated from her perhaps forever. This note he attached to the hook which hung from the ring around the dove's neck, and let the pretty creature fly. It rose into the air immediately, soared higher and higher, and, to the unspeakable delight of the count, had soon passed the boundaries of the Silent Valley and was lost in the distance.

In the mean time much had gone wrong at the king's court after the departure of Count Raymond, and the king, who had fully expected that as soon as the count was no longer present his daughter would forget him, found, to his chagrin, that he had been mistaken. From the day when the count's heralds had played that mournful air, "There's rest in the grave," the princess, poor, sweet lady, had seemed to think of little else, and had taken no delight in the gay revels going on around her. Her bright eyes grew dim, her gaiety vanished, and not only could she no longer enliven her father's melancholy in his gloomy moments, but he in his turn was obliged to undertake the part of comforter, and attempt to dissipate his daughter's ever-increasing sadness, which he did by suggesting all reasonable topics of consolation,—taking very good care, however, not to allude to the only thing that engrossed her mind entirely. But his fatherly affection could not long endure to contemplate the sufferings of his darling

child. And besides, the count's good friend, who stood high in the king's favour, used every means in his power to impress his master with a favourable view of the count's aspirations, so that at last the monarch's heart was softened, and he seemed inclined to grant the count his daughter's hand.

This good news was dispatched to the count by six couriers, who started off, one after another, with letters from the princess, each, after the first, a postscript to its predecessor. But the couriers all returned, after a few days, and announced that the count had never been at his castle on the Danube, and had sent no tidings as to whither he had gone. Then the princess mourned indeed, and the good king, moved by his daughter's tears, and fearing that the count had either committed suicide or joined a crusade against the infidels, reproached himself bitterly for his former hard-heartedness.

Who knows whether the princess, in her despair, might not have entered a convent and taken the veil, if, just at the right time, while she was sitting in her balcony, shedding sorrowing tears for her lost lover, the dove had not arrived from Castle Silence with the note announcing the count's place of exile and telling her of the enchantment that held him captive? Although the princess was rejoiced, and even the king himself, at this news, yet the latter was keenly alive to the mortifying circumstance that the count could not present himself at court, and to avoid any breach of etiquette he determined to visit Castle Silence in person, and to have the marriage celebrated there.

The count's friend set out the same day for the

banks of the Neckar, to announce to Raymond this happy change in his prospects. A few days afterward the king and his whole court followed him, with great pomp and splendour. The princess rode upon a white palfrey, and had entirely recovered her good spirits and gay humour. Her smile again shed its light upon all, and there was no end to her delight. Thus they travelled on, and at evening gorgeous tents were raised under which the whole court encamped to pass the night. But the moon was so bright, and the princess was in a state of such joyous excitement, that she could not sleep. She stepped outside of her tent and sat down, that she might send her thoughts on before to where her heart's treasure was. She had not sat long when she heard a rushing noise just above her, and, looking up, she saw a mighty eagle wheeling in huge circles above her head. At first she observed the flight of the bird with pleasure, but as he descended lower and lower she grew frightened and attempted to rise and return to her tent. Suddenly the eagle came so close to her, encircling her head in his wheeling flights, that the poor princess could not stir from the spot. In amazement she looked at the bird, and was not a little astonished when he bent his head respectfully, and addressed her. "Fairest princess," he said, "forgive me for frightening you ; but, while high in the air, I saw how brilliantly the crown that you wear upon your lovely head glittered in the moonlight, and I was seized with an unconquerable desire to beg it of you for my wife, the Lady Eagle. I know your good heart, and shall be grateful indeed to you if you grant my request."

When the princess heard the bird speak thus ration-

ally, she lost all fear, although she could not help smiling to herself at the eagle's vanity in wishing to adorn his wife with a crown. However, she took it off her head and handed it to the bird, who received it in his claws, thanked her in the most polite manner, and, rising from the ground, was soon lost to sight in the clouds. The princess gazed after him for awhile, and then rose from her seat to enter her tent, when she observed something shining upon the ground before her. She examined it more closely, and it proved to be one of the eagle's glossy, black feathers. She picked it up and took it with her into her tent.

The following day the court proceeded upon its journey, and at evening encamped under their tents upon a spacious plain. The princess, remembering the last night's adventure, seated herself again in the moonlight, and thought in her kind heart of the Lady Eagle's delight in receiving the jewelled crown, when, by chance, looking upwards, she saw, to her amazement, the eagle again in the air above her head, slowly descending towards her. Down he came, and made his obeisance before the princess; but this time there was a sorrowful expression in his eyes, as he said, "Ah! most gracious princess, you will repent your kindness to me, for I have come again to request something of you. My Lady Eagle found your crown so entirely to her taste that she has entreated me to beg you for your necklace, which matches it exactly. I know your kind heart, and shall be grateful indeed to you if you grant my request."

The princess, who could not help smiling again at the Lady Eagle's vanity, could not find it in her heart

to refuse the bird's request, so she took off her necklace and gave it to the eagle, who soon vanished with it in the air, leaving behind him another feather, which the princess picked up and laid aside with the first.

The next day brought them to their journey's end. They reached the bright, sparkling Neckar, and encamped at night where they saw before them the heights surrounding the valley and Castle Silence. Here, in full view of the place where her future husband was, the princess found it impossible to remain in her tent, but wandered forth to send a loving greeting towards the valley that nestled behind the hills. If she thought at all of the previous visits of the eagle, she never dreamed that he would return to beg for anything more. And yet, so it was. Scarcely had she looked at the full moon, when she heard the familiar sound above her head, and the eagle alighted upon the ground before her, but looking very anxious and unhappy. "Ah! kindest of princesses," said he, "you must think me importunate indeed, but my Lady Eagle has teased me until I have promised to beg for your bracelet, that her set of ornaments may be complete. Had I not known your kindness of heart, I should not have dared to prefer this last request; but be sure, if you grant it, my gratitude to you will be unbounded."

The good princess could not help now laughing aloud at the Lady Eagle's vanity, but she took off her bracelet and handed it to the bird, who was profuse in his polite thanks, and flew joyfully up to the heavens, leaving behind him a third feather, which the princess

picked up and laid aside with the other two. Then she went to her tent and slept in peace, dreaming of the bliss that awaited her on the morrow, when she should again see Count Raymond.

The count had been greatly surprised by his friend's arrival, and no less delighted by the good news which he brought. But, as the honest knight fared no better upon his entrance into the valley than had the count and his train—becoming on the instant as dumb as a fish—the two friends had at first great difficulty in making themselves intelligible to each other, for the odd pantomime in use at the castle was entirely strange to the new-comer.

Count Raymond could hardly credit his good fortune. For the first time since his exile, he commanded his followers to burnish their arms and array themselves gorgeously, while he instantly hastened to the border of the valley, that he might catch the first glimpse of the approaching train. All in Castle Silence were in a state of the greatest activity, busied in adorning castle and park in the gayest manner. It seemed as though inanimate objects even were aware whom they were to receive, for the flowers had never before breathed forth such delicious fragrance or displayed such brilliant colours. The very oaks and beeches appeared to be possessed with a desire to be gallant to the princess, for they raised their knotted boughs, with which they had hitherto excluded every one from the valley, and formed a beautiful, shady arch over the principal avenue to Castle Silence. Upon that height of the mountain chain surrounding the valley which

afforded a fine view of the Neckar and marked the boundaries of the enchanted land, the count erected a splendid pavilion, extending the canopy far out into the air on the other side of his border-line, that under it the king and his court might repose, as it was by no means likely that they would desire to enter the valley and become dumb.

At last, on a lovely evening, the count perceived the brilliant procession winding between the mountains and encamping upon the shores of the Neckar. His heart was brimming with rapture, not only with the expectation of seeing his beloved bride, but also because a voice within him seemed to whisper that the pure, faithful nature of the princess would in some way dispel the enchantment resting upon the valley and Castle Silence. Thus the night passed in blissful dreams and the first rays of the morning sun saw all the squires and attendants from Castle Silence drawn up in their most brilliant array in the interior of the pavilion. And now the royal train approached, and, after an interchange of greetings, the marriage ceremony began, conducted, of course, on one side, in dumb show. But, when it was concluded, the king could not refrain from reminding his daughter of all she would leave behind her when she passed the fatal boundary-line, and of the many trials that awaited her beyond it,—dwelling with great force and earnestness upon the loss of speech for the rest of her life. But the love and constancy of the princess scarcely allowed her to listen to these words. With tears, she sank upon her father's breast, embracing him tenderly, and then stepped across the boundary of the Silent Valley to her hus-

band,—a step accompanied by a shout of surprise from the whole royal train, who had always believed that, as soon as the princess saw the dumb assemblage on the other side, she would change her mind entirely.

But scarcely had the princess given her hand to her husband when a wonder became apparent, for she was not in the least dumb, but expressed her delight and happiness in her usual clear, silvery voice. The maids of honour and waiting-women, however, who accompanied her, did not fare so well, for, although they tried their best to send love and messages to their friends at home, they could not articulate a syllable, and their comical efforts to speak produced no little merriment in spite of the pain of parting. The king, delighted to perceive that his daughter had not lost the power of speech, once more gave her his blessing, from a distance, and then departed with his court, quite content.

And now, with the princess's arrival, a new and happy life began in Castle Silence. It seemed as though the air in field and grove were fresher and healthier, and as though the flowers bloomed with double splendour. All there were rejoiced to hear a human voice once more, particularly that of the princess, which was so soft and melodious that it thrilled with delight every one who heard it, and the count thought he had never listened to such delicious music.

Thus the noble pair lived contented and happy in their solitude, and in all the improvements of his estate the count found an able assistant in the princess, under whose direction everything flourished and grew more luxuriantly than ever. She would even ride out with

her husband into the forest, to watch the gambols of the stags and roes, who drew confidently near her, as though they knew that in her presence the count's hunting-spear would not harm them.

In the park, at some distance from the castle, there was a spot under the spreading beeches that the princess dearly loved. Thence could be seen the Silent Valley basking in quiet beauty, and the gaze wandered with rapture from the rivulets that intersected it to the meadows bordered by the lofty surrounding heights, covered with thick forests, which stood out in beautiful relief against the distant horizon. From this spot a path led on one side to the gentle eminence upon which stood the castle, and at the other end of this path there was to all appearance a small lake. But neither the count nor any of his train had ever succeeded in penetrating to the extremity of this path, so thickly grew the trees and underbrush that barred their progress and even prevented all glimpse of what lay beyond. Many an attempt had been made, but in vain, to cut through the thick, interlacing boughs that seemed to enclose a little sheet of water. There the princess was sitting one evening, in her favourite haunt, buried in thoughts of how fair and lovely the valley would be if only, by a removal of the enchantment that bound it, it could once more be placed in communication with the outside world.

Pondering this, she arose and wandered down the path to the thick bushes that terminated it, when, to her no small surprise, she perceived through the dense growth before her a narrow opening which showed a glimpse of a placid, waveless lake beyond. At first

she was about to turn back, but, impelled by some unseen power, she entered the narrow path, which had never been perceived there before, and which led her to the banks of the little lake. How great was her wonder when she saw in the midst of this little lake a plant, the leaves of which were coal-black with a narrow border of blood-red, while round this plant, in widening circles, swam a swan, also coal-black in colour.

The whole scene was so strange that the princess would fain have retraced her steps, but she could not. On the contrary, she sank down involuntarily upon a large mossy stone upon the shore, and, although she combated the feeling of intense weariness that crept over her, her head drooped, and she fell into a deep sleep.

She dreamed that the black swan came slowly to the shore and told her how she was an enchanted princess who had betrayed and murdered her young husband that loved her truly and faithfully, and therefore her father had cursed her, and how she had been condemned as a punishment for her crime to swim about this lonely lake, in despair and woe, until some king's daughter should, through her faithful love for her husband, be enabled to break the evil spell. "The sight of you, fair sister," the swan sung on, "has, after a thousand years of vain longing, once more awakened within me a hope that the enchantment may be dispelled. That you did not forget your lover is a proof of your fidelity, and that you followed him into this enchanted valley is a proof of your love. Your heart, too, must be wholly pure and free from guile, or the foliage around this lake would never



“ Taking one of the eagle’s feathers, she uttered aloud a wish that the
bird would remember her ”

have parted and shown you a path through it. And yet, notwithstanding all this, three things are still wanting, without which the enchantment that keeps me here can never be destroyed. These are, first a drop of the Water of Life, second a seed of the Roc flower, and third a breath of the warm gale that blows over Araby the Blest. But these things can only be procured by one who by kindness to her fellow-creatures has bound to her in chains of gratitude some inhabitant of the air."

So the princess seemed to dream, and when she awoke and saw the swan swimming quietly upon the water she pondered the words she had just heard, and went quietly and thoughtfully towards the castle. She was conscious of her faithful love for her husband, and of a pure heart, but how could she procure the three things indispensable to the breaking of the spell? As she was thinking over all this, the thought of the eagle's black feathers, which she had laid aside on that last evening and had forgotten, suddenly occurred to her, and that she had some claim upon the gratitude of the bird, who had been so profuse in his thanks. Full of these musings, she told no one of her visit to the lake, but, when she arose the next morning, she determined, before night, to make an attempt to summon the bird to her side by means of these three feathers, and break the spell resting upon Castle Silence.

As evening approached, she took her way towards the lonely lake. Again the dense foliage parted before her and she seated herself upon the mossy stone on the shore. Taking one of the eagle's feathers, she uttered aloud a wish that the bird would remember her, and

come down to her from the clouds. Scarcely had the words left her lips, when she heard the old whirr in the air, and the eagle alighted on the ground before her, and saluted her respectfully. "Fair princess," said he, "I hope you have called me to require some service of me by which I can testify my gratitude to you." The princess replied that she had indeed a difficult service to ask of him, which consisted in nothing less than in procuring for her a drop of the Water of Life. The bird bowed low, and assured her graciously that to bring her this drop would be a trifling matter to him. He took one of his feathers from her hand, soared into the air, and was soon out of sight. The black swan seemed to understand these proceedings, for it approached the shore where the princess sat, looked at her earnestly for some minutes, and, when it perceived that she had attracted her attention, took a drop of water from the lake in its bill, and, swimming towards the plant in the centre, let the drop fall upon its leaves.

In less than a minute the eagle returned, bearing in his beak the desired drop of water, which, at the request of the princess, who had understood the swan's signs, he sprinkled upon the plant. This was scarcely done, when the black hue and red rims of the leaves disappeared, and they became a beautiful fresh green.

In the same manner the princess begged the eagle to bring her a seed of the Roc flower and a breath of the gales of Araby the Blest,—both of which he brought in less than a minute. Scarcely had the seed fallen upon the plant in the centre of the lake, when a great bud grew forth from it, and upon this bud the eagle breathed the warm, spicy gale from Arabia.

Then a fearful clap of thunder rolled over the Silent Valley, and the waves of the lake, before so glassy, foamed and boiled furiously. With a loud report, the bud of the plant burst, and a flower unfolded itself, consisting of a single dark purple petal, upon which glittered three silver rings. Twice again the deafening thunder rolled, and the water of the lake raged in such foaming billows that the poor princess closed her eyes and sank into a deep swoon.

In Castle Silence the mighty claps of thunder were also heard, and every one, from the count to the meanest scullion, was thrilled with a joyful shock, for, instead of being forced, as usual, to express their wonder by signs, they were all suddenly able to speak. The count started from his seat, and, to his own surprise, asked his master of the horse whence a clap of thunder could proceed, with such clear skies above. The maids and ladies-in-waiting dropped their work and screamed aloud. The cellarer, who had a glass of foaming ale at his lips, let it fall, with a loud oath, and two stable-boys, who had been quarrelling very unsatisfactorily by signs only, were surprised to find that they could give vent to their ill humour in good round terms.

The count's first inquiry, when he had somewhat recovered himself, was for his wife, and, hastening along the corridor which led to her apartment, he met her ladies-in-waiting, who were looking for her also,—and together they went into the park to find her. The count, who arrived first at her favourite place of resort, was alarmed at not finding her there, and no less surprised to find that all the undergrowth at the foot of the

hill had disappeared. But in its place he saw a clear, quiet lake, surrounded by blooming roses which formed an arbour over a mossy stone, upon which the princess was seated. At this moment she recovered from her swoon, and sank, weeping with joy, upon her husband's bosom. In a few words she told him how she had freed the valley and Castle Silence from the spell under which it had so long lain. The sky was no longer gloomy and lowering, and high in the air hovered a mighty black eagle, while a pair of white swans were soaring away in a purple cloud that was seen sailing towards the east. The waters of the lake were clear and calm, and upon the little ripples that broke upon the shore where the princess was sitting, floated the purple flower-leaf with the three silver rings lying upon it.

As the count had often heard the legend of the three healing serpent-rings, and learned from his wife that at the moment of the disenchantment of the valley and castle these three rings had risen from the lake, he prized them very highly. He did well to do so, for they threw their spells around the princess and himself, who, if they had been beloved before, were now quite adored by all who came near them. The count adopted the three silver rings into his coat of arms, where they may be seen to this day, upon a crimson field.

THE FAIRY TANKARD.

UPON a high, high mountain there once stood a beautiful, stately castle, surrounded by thick walls and a deep moat, across which led heavy drawbridges with mighty portcullises, and on their upper part, carved in stone, were the arms of the powerful lord to whom the mountain and the castle belonged. We cannot exactly tell the name of this castle, but that has nothing to do with our story. Its walls and towers have crumbled into such ruin that scarcely one stone is left upon another. We now have to tell about the family who lived there. It was not destroyed with the castle, but was saved by the accidental preservation of a very young branch of this famous line of Schreckenbergs. It had from time immemorial done justice to its name, which signifies "Terrible-mountain," for if a train of merchants or others approached this stronghold, in their travels, they did it with terror: a falcon does not more surely perceive a dove than did the men-at-arms, watching on the towers of the castle, the procession of merchants in the valley below, even though they marched in the night that they might pass the dreaded fortress under cover of darkness. It really seemed as though its inmates were in league with evil spirits. The armed escorts which accompanied the trains were never able

to get the goods, which they were protecting, safely past this castle. The inhabitants of the neighbouring towns had often banded together and attempted for months to beleaguer the Schreckenberg on all sides, but in vain. The good citizens found, sooner or later, that it was better to spare a bale of silk, now and then, to the lord of Schreckenberg, for dresses for his lady-wife, or a wagon-load of skins for his men, than expose themselves to the darts from his mangonels, and thus put their own skins in peril.

The last of the illustrious and renowned family of Schreckenberg was Fritz of Schreckenberg, the worst and wildest of them all, and yet he was much more beloved than any others ever had been. Although he never allowed a train of merchants to pass by his castle without plundering them, he always left them something, and often contented himself with one-half of their goods. He never bore off to his castle the merchants or horsemen whom he attacked, and as long as Fritz reigned there, the castle-dungeons were empty. Neither did he ever make expeditions into the surrounding country, as those before him had done, but sat like a spider in its web, and only took what came within his clutches. This conduct was owing partly to his own natural good humour and partly to a prophecy which had been made to one of his ancestors and which designated the tenth Schreckenberg as the one under whom the castle should fall into decay so that not one stone should be left upon another. The death of his dearly-loved and gentle wife made the lord of Schreckenberg still more heedful of this prophecy, and often plunged him into melancholy. In his youth

Fritz had been married, but did not long enjoy the possession of his lovely wife, for, after having borne him a son, whom he had christened Kuno, she lived only one year, and then sought that heaven to which she clearly belonged, so pious and gentle was she.

But what in especial reminded the noble knight of the old prophecy was a dream which his wife dreamed three times just before her death, and which she related to him. She dreamed that, looking down from heaven, she saw the castle in flames, heard the crash of the battering-rams and the shouts of the besiegers, and saw her husband fight bravely and then fall with his sword in his hand, but she shortly had the consolation of having him with her in heaven. With her child, the little Kuno, it was far otherwise. She saw plainly the apartment where the little fellow had hidden himself in a large arm-chair, terrified at the tumult and noise; and how his attendants ran away, frightened, and left him alone. She shuddered, when the flames spread more and more, and she heard the noise grow louder, and perceived no means of escape for the child. Then, suddenly, he looked up cheerfully, and ran to a corner of the room where stood a great copper tankard that she had never seen before. He seized it by the handle, and she dreamed that the tankard glided swiftly away, with the child clinging to it. She saw it float down the burning stairs, over the shattered drawbridge and ruinous walls, to the clear fields without, where the boy and tankard vanished. As I said before, the poor lady dreamed this three times without any change, and related it minutely to her husband, who was not greatly edified thereby. But he listened

quietly, and thought, wisely enough, "No one can avert his destiny, I'm sure I cannot. Let us calmly await the inevitable." At the request of the sick countess, all the old rubbish in the castle was overhauled, in hopes of finding a tankard which should bear some resemblance to the one she had seen in her dream, and such an one was actually found. It was an old copper vessel that had lain about for many years without attracting any one's attention. Now it was brought out and cleansed from dirt and dust, when it was found that upon its sides were engraved coats of arms and all sorts of entertaining scenes, tournaments, battles, etc. The tankard was, by the countess's command, made the constant plaything of the young Kuno, who was not a little delighted with his new acquisition. It seemed indeed as though the child knew of how much importance this tankard, according to his mother's dream, would one day become to him, for after it was given to him he disliked to part with it, and would amuse himself for hours tracing with his little finger the strange pictures engraved upon its sides.

It was as if the feeble spark of life within the countess's breast had only tarried until she might fulfil her desire concerning the tankard, and as though she felt that she had committed her boy to the protection of a powerful guardian spirit. A few weeks after the finding of the vessel, she closed her eyes and left this wicked world, to seek the purer joys of heaven. The count was naturally much distressed at her death, and appeared to have lost all desire to pursue his former robber-career. The esquire upon the highest tower in vain descried whole trains of travelling

merchants,—his master, pondering the ancient prophecy, had no desire to call down Heaven's wrath upon his head any sooner than had been decreed; on the contrary, he did all that he could to induce Heaven to regard him favourably. He built convents, heaped wealth upon poor pilgrims, and lived quiet and retired in his castle. He liked far better to sit with little Kuno by his side, and drink the best wine in his cellar from the copper tankard, than to ride plundering about over hills and fields. He would tell of his early adventures for hours at a time, or play with the boy until the wine began to stupefy him and he went quietly to sleep. This often happened, and he imagined that his dreams were much pleasanter than usual, when he drank out of the copper tankard. It is true that at such times he often dreamed, as his wife had done, of the ruin of his castle, but he always saw from the decay a lovely flower arise—the crown imperial—and wave proudly above the grass and flowers which grew around it.

The little Kuno got to be ten years old, and, as the Count of Schreckenbergh no longer molested travellers, and was at peace with the knights in the neighbourhood, he began gradually to consider his wife's dreams, as well as the ancient prophecy, as something quite visionary and incredible. Unfortunately, he could not long repose in this belief. Suddenly a band of men from a neighbouring country devastated the land, and a universal bloody war arose. Then Fritz of Schreckenbergh knew that his hour had come, and, calling together his vassals and retainers, he chose the stoutest from among them, and with their help buried

his principal treasures. After he had given these men a generous part of his wealth, he made them swear a solemn oath that if he did not escape with his life they would care for his son. He then fortified his castle as strongly as he could, and awaited the issue, which was quick and sad enough.

Everything happened which the dying countess had foreseen in her dream. The castle was stormed, and the count fell, as did his best men,—indeed, all of those who had taken the oath to succour his child and who preferred to fulfil the first oath that they had taken—that of fidelity to their lord, in fulfilment of which they stood, fought, and died by his side. The castle walls were so shattered that not one stone remained upon another, and, as the attendants of the little Kuno obeyed the impulse “each for himself,” the poor child was left alone, and no living soul knew what had become of him.

While all the evil which the countess had foreseen was thus fulfilled, the good which she had prophesied was also realized, and the little Kuno was preserved in a wonderful and mysterious manner. When the uproar arose around the castle, he listened at first to the blasts of the horns and the shouts of the besiegers without fear, but his childish delight only lasted until the windows of the apartment where he was were reddened by the flames of the burning rafters, and until the battle-cries of the combatants, mingled with the groans of the wounded, became audible in the passages and stairways near him. Then he was seized with an indefinable terror, and he tried to open the door, which his faithless attendants had shut tightly behind them when

they left him. But, as he was too weak to do this, he hastened to his old playfellow, the copper tankard, which stood in the corner, and, seizing it by the handle, called weeping upon his father.

The connection in his mind of the tankard with his father was very natural. He had seen the old lord with this vessel constantly in his hand. But Fritz of Schreckenbergh could not hear his child's cries. It was just at this moment that he fell lifeless to the ground, struck down by the weapon of an enemy. After the boy had called his father and attendants several times in vain, he suddenly felt himself gently drawn along, as though the tankard were a living being taking him with it. The door sprang open, and Kuno glided through it, down the burning stairs, without being singed by the flames, and past the crumbling walls, without a stone's touching him. Thus he went swiftly through the court-yard towards the great gate, and would soon have been beyond the castle precincts, when he heard close to him the cries of a boy who, in former, happy days, had often been his playfellow. His name was Wolf, and he was the warder's son.

Kuno no sooner heard his old playfellow's voice, than he answered it, "Here, here!" and added, "Hurry, dear Wolf, and come quickly, or we shall both be burnt up!" Wolf made no delay in jumping out of his hiding-place—an immense water-butt—and came, running quickly. He had scarcely touched Kuno's dress, when the invisible power which had borne the boy unhurt down the burning stairs was again exerted, and the two children hurried safely onwards. They hardly knew how they got to the foot of the mountain; they ran a

long way through the fields without being tired, and when, sometimes, they turned back to see whence they had come, they beheld Kuno's paternal castle in flames, at which sight they both burst into tears, without, however, staying their flight for an instant. Then they ascended other mountains, and their burning home began to grow indistinct, and soon they saw nothing of it but a red reflection against the sky. Evening had already set in.

The boys now suddenly felt extremely tired, and looked about for some place where they could pass the night. But they could see nothing, far or near, save heaths and forests, mountains and valleys,—no house, not even a poor shed, under which they might creep to avoid passing the night in the open air. They sat down upon the green moss under a tree, and, after regarding each other with mournful looks, and moaning deeply, they burst into fresh tears and felt that they had indeed lost everything. "Ah!" sobbed Kuno, "where can my papa be? They have killed him, and he is dead!" "Yes," added Wolf, "and mine, and my mother, and my little sister!" "All, all dead," interrupted Kuno, "all dead and gone!"

At these words their tears burst forth anew, and they sobbed together. But, as no one was near to pity them and beg them not to cry any more, they soon stopped, and Wolf, who was two years older than Kuno, tried to divert his companion's thoughts. "Yes, dear Kuno," said he, "we are unhappy indeed, for we have lost everything. What is to be done? There is no house near to receive us, so we must sleep in the open air, and I don't think it will kill us. Don't you

remember that your father told us that when he was a little boy he went out hunting, and that the whole train lost their way, and that he, as well as the oldest esquire, had to sleep upon the ground, and that it did him no harm? So we will lie down close together, and see if we too cannot sleep under the open sky."

Kuno was indeed somewhat comforted by these words from his companion in misfortune, and, as he as well as Wolf was a stout-hearted boy, he assented, and they looked for a fitting sleeping-place. Kuno had until this moment held the copper tankard—to which, without knowing it, they both owed their preservation—firmly in his hand, for this cup, his sole inheritance, reminded him so vividly of his ruined home, his father and his mother, that he felt comforted in having it near him.

After the two boys had looked around them for some time, they found a hollow oak lined with the softest moss. Wolf made his companion creep in first, that with his tankard he might have the safest and best place, while he himself lay down in the entrance, that in case of danger he might be able to protect his little friend.

Both fell sound asleep, and, as they were very weary, they did not wake until the sun had climbed to the tops of the mountains and sent its red, quivering rays into the hollow tree. Then they sprang up, crept out of their shelter, and held a council as to the best course to pursue. Kuno thought it would be advisable to retrace their steps to the castle, to see if perhaps one of his father's friends, who could help them, might yet survive. But Wolf disapproved of this plan, assuring

his little friend that the enemy was swarming in the neighbourhood to collect booty, and that they should certainly be killed if they showed themselves. This satisfied Kuno, and they determined to wander through the country, trying to support themselves in some way. They plucked, for breakfast, some berries which were growing around, and then went to a little brook which gurgled through the grass not far from their shelter-tree. Here they filled the tankard with clear water, and, when they had both taken a drink, were not a little surprised to find that, notwithstanding the little that they had eaten, they were no longer hungry.

Then they set out with renewed strength, and, turning their backs towards the quarter where they supposed their old home was, they walked on without turning to the right or left, they knew not whither. The only thing to which they gave heed was the nature of the soil over which they passed. At one time they would make a great circuit that they might avoid wading through a swamp, and at another they had to walk for a long time on the edge of a wood along which ran a deep ditch. Thus they toiled wearily on all day long. And when the sun set they had no prospect of passing the night more comfortably than the last. There were no signs of human habitation around them, no cultivated fields or fruit-trees,—nothing save dreary heaths through which here and there rippled desolately a half-dried up brook. The forests consisted of black, gloomy firs, whose branches hung sadly down upon the ground, and which moaned and sighed fitfully when the wind swept through them. It grew darker and darker, and the two boys

seated themselves on the banks of a little stream, and, as during their day's march they had found no berries to satisfy their hunger, they filled their tankard with water from the brook and took a deep draught.

But what was their astonishment when, upon drinking, they discovered, as in the morning, that their hunger was as perfectly satisfied as though they had eaten an excellent meal! They soon fell quietly asleep, and, awaking strengthened and refreshed in the morning, they pursued their way. It was now the third day since they had left home, and, alas! their future looked no brighter than at first. They walked on, across moors, through fir forests, and over moors again, until the afternoon, and just as the sun was beginning to set they saw before them in the distance a mountain-chain covered with firs and other fresh green, where they hoped at last to find human habitations and some assistance. They refreshed themselves again with a draught of clear water, and strode onwards so stoutly that at nightfall they had reached the mountains. The hope of finding men and human dwellings upon these hills would not allow them to spread their nightly couch under the open air in the valley, but they began bravely to ascend the steep elevation to search for a house or village above. Behind them rose the full moon, illumining their path brilliantly, and this was of great assistance to them, for the higher they went the steeper and more rocky grew the path. Great masses of stone, over which they climbed only with great difficulty, at times blocked their way, and then the bushes and fallen trunks of trees would make their progress

almost impossible. But after several most laborious hours they reached the top of the mountain and threw themselves exhausted upon the ground, under an oak, to rest awhile. After their fatigue had lessened somewhat, Wolf climbed into the tree and surveyed the country all around. Just before them the forest descended, and it seemed as though the group of mountains, upon which they were, enclosed in a great half-circle a quiet valley. And this was really so; but, with all his exertions, Wolf could see nothing around him except the tops of the trees. Something, it is true, glistened among them here and there, which, when he strained his gaze, seemed to be a large round lake upon which the moon shone brightly. Kuno, who was not contented with the comfortless description that Wolf gave of the prospect, insisted upon climbing the tree himself, which he did, still holding his dear tankard in his hand. When he too stood in the tree-top, the two boys again looked sharply about them, and, although Wolf insisted that there was nothing to be seen, Kuno suddenly cried out that he could see a little house down there, and pointed to it with his finger. But, although Wolf wiped his eyes and gazed so earnestly that the trees seemed to dance around him, he could see nothing until, accidentally, he laid his hand upon the copper tankard, and then he instantly saw the little house of which Kuno had spoken. He could not imagine how he could have missed seeing before what was now so plain before his eyes. After he had taken the precaution of throwing his cap from the tree in the direction of the house, both came down and betook themselves thither. They found the descent into the

valley much easier than the ascent of the mountain had been, but they were obliged to walk quickly for two good hours before they reached the small house, which had seemed so near when seen from the top of the tree.

At last they stepped out of the forest upon a grassy opening, in the midst of which was a little garden surrounding a cottage. The little garden was enclosed by a fence made of white and red coral tipped with silver snakes'-heads. They walked round and round this fence many times, vainly seeking for a gate that they might open. They were just about to climb over it, when Kuno, who carried the copper tankard in his hand, accidentally touched the coral fence with it in passing, and instantly a gate sprang open and admitted them to the garden. It closed immediately behind them, and so perfectly were the coral stakes and rails fitted together that they in vain attempted to discover the opening through which they had come. This was surprising enough, but at sight of the garden they were almost beside themselves with wonder. The paths that wound among the flower-beds shone as though they were covered with silver dust. And their brilliancy was nothing to that of the flowers which grew in the beds. It was like a shower of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, pearls, gold, and silver,—this splendour that danced and glittered before the eyes of the astonished boys. They were so dazzled that they could not examine these wonderful plants more closely. Wolf besought his companion not to stay too long in the strange garden, but to go with him directly to the cottage, that the owner might not complain of

their wandering so long in his grounds without asking his permission.

So, as silently as possible, they approached the cottage that stood before them. Its four walls were of smooth, white marble, and the windows seemed to be huge brilliants framed and set in gold. The roof consisted of red coral with its branches all sticking upright, and, like the fence, every point was surmounted by a silver snake's-head; it seemed as though thousands of red snakes were writhing there. The two boys now stood before the golden door, and Wolf knocked modestly to attract the attention of the inmates. He knocked once, twice, three times, but no one came to open the door. As they thought that every one within must be asleep, they knocked more loudly, and when this was of no avail the two boys raised their voices and begged imploringly to be admitted, saying that they were two poor children who had lost their way and did not know where they should pass the night. In vain; no one appeared, and not the slightest noise was heard within the house. Kuno, who was very weary, sat down upon the ground before the door, and in doing so accidentally knocked his copper tankard against it, when it instantly flew open.

Wolf, in great astonishment, started back and did not dare to enter. But at last both took courage, and after they had once more called upon the inmates, whoever they might be, and who were neither to be seen nor heard, they passed through the door and came to a little room furnished with great magnificence. What surprised and delighted them most was the sight of two beds there. Timidly and anxiously they drew near

them, to see if they contained any one. But, although they turned back the coverlets and even looked under the beds, they could find no one. Whereupon, after a short consultation, fatigue prevailed, and they decided to get into these beds themselves. They therefore undressed and crept under the silken covers, said their evening prayers, and were soon fast asleep.

As is often the case with children who sleep for the first time in a strange place, though upon ever so soft a bed, and in ever so beautiful a room, these two boys awoke much earlier than usual. And this morning there was an additional cause for an early awakening. As soon as the day broke above the mountain-tops the windows began to glitter and shine and shoot forth thousands of such red, yellow, white, and green rays, that it was enough to awaken the dead. Kuno first rubbed his eyes, and, with a cry of admiration, looked around. He had just been dreaming that they had gone to sleep, as before, under an oak, and had been awakened by the dampness of the moss and the cold, sharp morning air. All the more charmed was he to find himself actually awake, in a finer and softer bed than he had ever slept in at home. As for Wolf, who had never imagined such luxury, he stretched and turned under the silken counterpane, and could hardly make up his mind to get out of bed. But the curiosity which the many wonderful and beautiful objects around excited in the boys would not let them rest any longer. They sprang up, slipped on their clothes, and began a minute examination of the room. Everything was strangely magnificent. The night before, the darkness had prevented their seeing much

around them, so now they were all the more amazed and charmed.

The bedsteads in the room were especially remarkable. They were of gold, and the feet represented beautiful writhing snakes bearing the frame upon their heads. After the two children had gazed their fill, they went out into the garden, and, if they had admired the flowers there on the preceding evening, they were enchanted when they saw them in the light of the morning sun. Everything was so splendid that each called out to the other that he could spend his life here. The slopes of the mountains surrounding this valley were covered with the freshest green, sparkling with dewdrops that looked like diamonds in the light of the morning sun. The water of a little brook, that tumbled plashing down the mountain-side, was collected in a marble basin below, and thence flowed gently through the lovely garden.

After the boys had refreshed themselves with a draught of water, they determined to explore the valley, to find, if they could, the owner of the cottage. They longed to ask him if they might stay in this lovely spot, and if allowed to do so, were ready to promise to keep the garden in perfect order and make themselves useful in every way. With this intention Kuno took the tankard under his arm, and they both left the garden. They followed the course of the brook, which ran for a short distance through green meadows and then entered the grove that extended through the larger part of the valley. The boys were so invigorated by their sound night's sleep that they sang and shouted. Besides, they hoped thus to attract the attention of the master

of the house, who might be walking in the grove. It seemed to them at first rather strange that there were no birds here to reply to their singing. They stopped and listened every little while, but echo alone answered their shouts. They went on and on, until the wood began to grow less dense, and Wolf thought that he could see in the distance the shimmer of the lake which they had observed the day before from the top of the tree. They hurried on, and soon discovered that they were not mistaken, for when they issued from the grove they found themselves on the brink of a large lake, the waters of which were coal-black and looked very gloomy. No ripple stirred its surface, and, although it was summer-time, it looked as though it were frozen. Even when the wind blew down a yellow leaf from the surrounding trees, it did not rest upon the water, but skimmed along its glassy surface, stopping only when it reached the land.

The two boys seated themselves upon the shore, on a mossy stone, not knowing what to think of all this. Wolf, who had often listened at home to mysterious tales,—told by the squires and men-at-arms,—of enchanted countries, water-witches, and fairies, suggested that they were in one of these enchanted places,—a supposition not particularly agreeable to either of them. They began to be afraid, and, although their surroundings looked pleasant enough, they gazed about them with suspicion and mistrust. The quiet that reigned around; the black water, even the beautiful dwelling in which they had slept, seemed strange and fearful to them now, for Wolf remembered a story in which the ogre, who devoured]

people, was accustomed to tempt little children within his domains by means of just such things, that he might make a meal of them afterwards.

With these thoughts, the two boys sat there sadly enough and gazed into the water, which, although black, was tolerably transparent. They leaned over the stone and looked down for a long time, and Kuno, who held his tankard tight in his arms, was the first to discover something beneath the surface of the lake. He thought he could see walls and roofs, and even a stately castle, down there, far larger and more beautiful than his father's. Then Wolf looked too, and thought he could see the same. And, as they both had good strong sight, they soon found that they had not been mistaken. There really was at the bottom of the lake a large and splendid castle, with lofty walls and towers, which they could see at last as distinctly as one sees objects through a thin mist. This discovery was not calculated, however, to allay their fears. On the contrary, they saw clearly that they were actually in an enchanted valley, and they fully believed that the cottage in which they had slept was the home of the magician, who meant to entrap and devour them.

Although these thoughts were not likely to attract them to the little house, yet it was with them as it often is with men, who, instead of avoiding and fleeing from some terrible object, are continually impelled by a shuddering kind of curiosity to approach it. They got up and went back along the brookside until they again saw the cottage where they had passed the night. They peered anxiously around, fearful of discovering some horror behind every tree and bush ; but no, they

encountered nothing terrible. The cottage stood, just as peaceful as ever, before them, and within it all was unchanged. They entered, and searched every corner of their sleeping-room, to find some entrance to another apartment, for the smallness of their room did not accord with the size of the house as seen from without. But, although they tried their best to discover the crack of some concealed door in the beautiful, smooth walls, their trouble was of no avail, they could find nothing. After they had busied themselves for awhile in the garden weeding the beds and tying up the flower-stalks which the wind had blown down, the evening came on, and the two boys again betook themselves to rest, with very anxious hearts, for they were afraid that the magician would appear in the night and put an end to their lives. But their fears were unfounded,—they slept quietly and soundly all night long in the silken beds, and were first awakened the next morning by the dazzling rays of the sun shining through the brilliant window-panes.

They arose briskly, and their fears of finding themselves in the power of a sorcerer began to diminish. In the absence of all other nourishment they applied themselves to their tankard, which did not fail them, but refreshed and satisfied them in the most wonderful manner. Then they went hand in hand to explore the valley again. This time they did not turn towards the black lake, but tried to ascend the mountains forming the wall around the valley. At first they thought they had discovered a path leading upwards, but when they had pursued it for a hundred paces it turned and led down again, and thus it was with

a second and a third path which they found. Then they tried to ascend by climbing through the trees and bushes, but here some gigantic, fallen tree would bar their way, and there they would find themselves right against a perpendicular mass of rock. Thus they laboured on for several hours, and at last were obliged to turn back, resolving, as they had not succeeded in this attempt, to find a way around the lake, that they might explore its other side.

As well as they could see from the shore, where they sat yesterday, this lake stretched far into the valley, but any extended view was made impossible by a thick growth of trees and bushes, through which the water was gleaming here and there. They turned towards the left side of the lake, hoping to find a path along its margin, but here they met with countless difficulties. The steep boundaries of the valley ascended sheer from the water's edge, leaving only a hand's-breadth of ground to walk upon, and then in places huge masses of rock overhung the lake itself, so that the boys soon found that they must give up all hope of continuing their explorations on this side. As it was beginning to grow dark again, they determined to try the other side the next day, and turned back to their cottage to pass the third night there.

The evening was exquisitely fine, and the two boys, excited by the ill success of their voyages of discovery, found it impossible to go directly to bed when they reached home. The sun sank behind the mountains, and soon the moon arose on the other side of the heavens and peeped through the dark firs down into the valley, as though longing to discover whither the

sun, her faithless lover whom she pursues so constantly, had fled. In this never-ending pursuit the poor pale face of the moon blushed red, and her colour vanished only when she was high enough above the mountains to see that the sun was not hidden in the valley, and that all her pains to reach him were in vain.

The two children sat down upon a grassy knoll behind the house, and thought of their homes and of their dear parents and friends now lost to them forever. They talked over all their last days at the castle, and amused themselves with recalling to each other's remembrance every trifling incident that either could recollect. They described to each other the tumult and noise of the siege, and Kuno told his companion how great had been his terror when he first saw the red reflection of the flames upon his window-panes. Thus they sat, looking now through the valley shaded by thick trees from the moon's rays, and now at the moon itself quietly ascending the dark concave of the night. Suddenly they seemed to hear sounding from the shores of the lake a low, tinkling echo, as though some one were passing his finger around the edge of a wine-glass, or as though small silver bells were chiming. As they had never before heard the slightest sound in the valley, they listened to this strange music with the keenest attention. It seemed to come nearer and nearer, and its tones grew louder and more distinct. But, although they both tried to see what could cause this music, they could discover nothing. At last Kuno motioned to his companion to be quiet, and pointed down into the valley before them, where something shining was issuing from beneath the trees that bordered the lake.

It was as if two shining, fiery threads were approaching slowly through the grass. Wolf looked, and was not a little terrified, for, as his eyes were sharper than his friend's, he soon discovered two little snakes, glittering and sparkling in the most extraordinary manner. As they moved on through the grass the music sounded which they had heard before, and which now seemed to be caused by the rustling of their serpent-forms along the ground. Soon these two strange creatures had entirely emerged from the trees, and the boys could see them more distinctly. They really were two snakes, but not nearly so frightful and ugly as such creatures usually are. They glided along easily and gracefully, now raising their heads as if to look about them, and now lowering them that they might slip through the grass, seeming to delight in the music which they made,—for, although there was no particular time kept in it, it accorded melodiously with every twist and turn of their bodies.

Although the boys were very much afraid at first, they could not help being pleased with the two shining creatures. They watched with great interest their movements through the dark grass. Shortly they turned and approached the garden which surrounded the little house. They touched the coral fence, went through the little gate, and vanished within the cottage. This the boys had not expected, and they looked at each other with surprise, thinking that it was not right that the cold snakes should take possession of the pretty little house. In the mean time it occurred to Wolf that perhaps the creatures had a better right to the dwelling than they themselves had,

and he called to mind a story in which some swans had a little house in the middle of a pond, furnished with beds and everything comfortable, and where they slept at night.

Filled with this idea, the boys became so curious that, in spite of their dread of some wicked magician who might work them harm, they got up and crept upon tiptoe as softly as possible towards the house, to see what the two snakes were doing there. After many fruitless attempts to find it, the coral gate opened as usual when Kuno touched it by chance with the copper tankard. They slipped through the garden and placed themselves where they could look in at one of the windows. They then saw the two snakes lift up their heads against the marble wall of the room, when a door suddenly opened which led into another, far more splendid and magnificent than the first. Here the walls were of pure gold, and, as there were no windows to let in the light, a ruby as big as a man's fist was suspended from the ceiling, shedding a deep purple but very brilliant light over the little room, by which they could see that the place was filled with all kinds of beautiful furniture. There were little tables and arm-chairs, and wash-basins and goblets, all made of metal, adorned with many beautifully-engraved figures. The idea occurred to Wolf that the tankard which Kuno was carrying matched the things in this room exceedingly well, for upon the table there was a vessel very much like it, only not so large and handsome.

The snakes glided up on one of the tables, and then slipped into a wash-basin filled with a pink fluid, in which they bathed themselves for awhile. Then they

left the bowl and glided down to the floor again. As they raised themselves against each other, the serpent-skins fell from their bodies, and they were transformed into two beautiful young girls of from ten to twelve years old, who fell into each other's arms, weeping loudly.

The two boys beheld this transformation with the greatest astonishment. That there was magic in all this they saw clearly, but they were far more delighted than frightened. The two girls looked so amiable and lovely that they were not in the least afraid of them. They would have dearly liked to go to them and find out why they had been serpents only a few minutes before. Kuno was especially desirous to enter the room and speak to them, but Wolf held him back, reminding him that it was clearly their duty to go quietly away and leave the two princesses (for such they certainly were, judging from the little gold crowns that they had on) in undisturbed possession of the house, which belonged, of course, far more to them than to the two boys. At first Kuno could hardly tear himself away from the window, so earnestly was he observing the two princesses, who now left the small room and went into the one where the two beds were. There they sat down in an arm-chair, with their arms around each other's waists, and talked very seriously together, while they shed many tears, but not one word of what they said could the boys understand.

After they had sat thus for awhile, they embraced and kissed each other, and then each slipped into one of the beds in which the boys had slept the night before. As just at this moment the moon, which had illumined the bedroom with its clear rays, sank behind

the mountains, the little house grew very dark, and the boys could see nothing more. In great amazement at the occurrences of the evening, they left the garden, that they might not disturb the little mistresses of the house, and lay down at the edge of the thicket, resolving firmly to awake at daybreak and see what would become of the two snakes, or rather of the two princesses. But they slept very soundly. Whether because they had walked about a great deal, or because the guardian angel who watches over orphan children had not thought it best that they should carry out their intention, and so made their eyelids heavy, we cannot say;—when they awoke the sun was high in the heavens, and, upon hurrying to the house, they found it just as empty as on the first day that they had entered it.

They examined everything most carefully, the beds, the chairs, the drawers of the table, but after the most diligent search they could find no trace of the princesses nor of the door leading to the next room.

They wandered sadly about, both repenting their modesty on the preceding evening, and wishing that they had knocked at the window and represented themselves as two poor boys who had gone astray in this place, which they had never seen before. But as they hoped to see the two beautiful snakes again some future evening, they determined to wait patiently, and, as what was done could not be undone, they began anew their exploration of the valley. They went to the lake and attempted to walk along its margin towards the left. They succeeded much better than when, the day before, they had pursued the other direction. They

found a convenient pathway, and followed it until they reached the farthest spot which had been visible from the head of the lake, and there, as they had suspected, the water became hidden among the trees. The lake grew much narrower, and formed here a long angle, around which the boys could not get, for the path suddenly ceased at the foot of a steep mass of rock which they were unable to climb, and which prevented their advancing one step.

After making several vain attempts to scramble up this rocky wall, while they were looking anxiously about them, Wolf discovered a little flight of stairs leading directly down to the lake, and at its foot a skiff lay moored. Much as the boys desired to enter the boat, that they might pursue their explorations with its aid, dread of the black water at first deterred them from such an undertaking. Kuno, especially, deprecated such a step, for the castle at the bottom of the lake seemed to him more fearful and strange than the colour of the water.

“Only suppose, dear Wolf,” said he, “that we were to sail upon this black water, and that one of the castle gates down there should open, and that a horseman should ascend, and ask us who we were, and what we wanted. Or suppose the skiff should suddenly sink, and we should fall down there among all those people who are perhaps within the castle, enchanted forever.”

At first Wolf gave heed to these warnings, but, as he had set his heart upon reaching the other shore of the lake and seeing if there were not some human beings there, he gradually converted his friend to his proposal and persuaded him to take a sail upon the

water. Thus, after much discussion, they descended the steps and seated themselves in the boat, but they attempted for a long time in vain to loosen the chain by which it was fastened with a padlock to the steps. At last Kuno, who sat in the stern of the little skiff, in making a fresh attempt to unfasten the lock, touched the chain with the tankard, which he was carrying, and instantly the chain parted and left the boat free upon the water. Now, Wolf had often seen the servants at home, when they wished to glide close by the shore of the pond, without oars, that they might draw in the nets that had been set for fish, help their boat through the water by seizing the bushes and boughs of the trees that grew overhead, and pulling themselves along. When the chain parted, he tried to imitate them, but in making the attempt he almost fell into the water, for no sooner was the boat set free than it turned away from the shore, and, without sail or oar, suddenly shot out into the middle of the lake. In vain did they try to stop it by calling to it to stand still, as one would to an unruly steed, shouting, in their fright, with all their strength. Wolf, in especial, when he felt himself thus borne away, first entreated the boat most politely, and then ordered it in the harshest terms, to turn around instantly or to stop. In vain; they darted rapidly onwards. They soon passed the place where the lake grew narrower, and, sailing around the rocky wall which had impeded their progress on the shore, they saw before them the rest of the lake, which was as large and broad as the other half behind them.

Although the skiff moved forwards so swiftly upon the water, it did not cleave the waves with its prow,

but seemed to glide over the surface as though upon ice. And there was no noise of water plashing against the sides of the boat, or murmuring gently. All was silent and still. At first the boys feared that when they reached the middle of the lake its shores would retreat, leaving them upon a boundless, lonely sea. But it was not so,—the shores kept their places, and the boys discovered that they were steering towards an island which seemed to lie near the other end of the black pond. This island could not be very large, and yet the trees and bushes upon its banks appeared to be impenetrable. Trees upon trees, with their thick foliage, formed a green wall, and between their trunks grew low underbrush, weaving them together. The children soon saw that there was a little flight of steps here too, leading down to the water, and thither the boat directed its course. It soon reached the shore, and, pushing through the boughs and bushes that grew over the water, touched the steps, alongside of which it lay perfectly motionless.

Wolf, who was the first to recover from his astonishment and terror, sprang upon the shore and helped out his comrade, who, now that the adventure seemed likely to end without danger of any kind, enjoyed it mightily, and laughed at their involuntary sail. They held a consultation as to what was to be done, and Kuno thought that the best thing would be to speak very politely and encouragingly to the little vessel, that it might turn round and carry them back whence they came, as there could not be anything very remarkable upon this island. Wolf, on the contrary, was of opinion that they should penetrate to its in-

terior. He could not suppose it likely that the skiff had brought them so far against their will without some good purpose. He induced his friend to walk along the shore, in hopes of finding some opening through the bushes. They passed around the island several times, examining the wall of foliage very minutely, to find some little hole through which they might slip, but none could be found. Some magic must have been at work, for it certainly seemed as though the trees interwove themselves more thickly when either of the two children tried to creep through.

While engaged in this search, it became noonday. The sun was high in the heavens, and the boys sat down on the shore of the island to rest after their exertions. They were very hungry and thirsty. As there was no brook near to supply their need, Wolf proposed that they should for once try the water of the lake. He filled the tankard and took a good drink, and, when he found that the water was cool and pleasant, he handed it to Kuno, who, however, could not bring himself to put it to his lips. When he thought of the castle at the bottom of the lake, in which, perhaps, men were lying spell-bound at that very minute, he declared that he would rather die of hunger than taste such water. So he took the tankard and threw its contents out among the bushes. But how shall we describe his astonishment, when he saw that wherever the water touched the boughs and foliage, they opened, leaving a free passage between them ! The boys sprang up, and, after convincing themselves that this wonder had really taken place, Wolf boldly entered the path thus formed, and Kuno followed him.

They went on for a few steps among the trees, which grew here very irregularly. But they soon found before them a pathway, on either side of which were groups of plants and bushes, whose arrangement showed clearly that they owed their position there to art. They followed this path, which led to the interior of the island, and soon, leaving the thick underbrush behind them, came out upon a grassy plain, at sight of which they both gave a cry of wonder, and stood as if rooted to the spot. There in the midst of this plain was a large table, at which sat twenty or thirty men, who, although they seemed to be in the midst of conversation and laughter, were all stiff and motionless. At first the boys thought that their sudden appearance had startled the company and held them motionless for a few seconds. Kuno turned to run, but Wolf held him back, and continued to stare at this strange sight with wide-open eyes. Nothing stirred, and the figures sat there as if hewn out of stone. Wolf, whose courage soon returned, first made a slight noise, then coughed, and cleared his throat loudly, and, finding that the men paid no attention, he shouted aloud, "Halloo! halloo!" and Kuno joined in lustily. But nothing stirred.

When the boys found, to their joy, that all their exertions to arouse the motionless assembly were in vain, they stepped up cautiously to the table, to examine the strange company more closely. It seemed as though some assemblage of brave knights had been overtaken by an evil spell in the midst of a banquet, and turned to stone. At the head of the table, upon which stood bowls, goblets, and beakers of mighty di-

mensions, sat a stately old man in magnificent armour, with a crown upon his head, and behind him stood two pages, to one of whom he seemed to be giving some command, while the other was handing him a goblet of wine. There was an expression so serious, and at the same time so kindly, in the old man's face, that it must have inspired every one with confidence, and the two boys were sorry indeed that he was just as stiff and stony as the rest, and could give them no gentle answer or look. The knights who sat upon his right and left hand seemed to be absorbed in earnest conversation. Some had just seized a goblet with one hand, while they leaned with the other upon the table or the hilts of their swords, gazing earnestly, meanwhile, into each other's faces; and these faces, although they were cold and stiff, wore such meaning expressions that one could easily tell which had been speaking and which listening.

There sat two, with their arms upon each other's shoulders, gazing into the air. The expression upon their faces was one of uncommon joviality, and one could readily believe, seeing their laughing, half-opened mouths, that a jolly drinking-song was just coming from their lips. The two boys passed, wondering, around the table, and as they came behind the old man with the crown they noticed that on either side of him were two carved chairs, which were, however, empty. Kuno, who was not so stout-hearted as Wolf, was still a little afraid to go quite close to the company, and was continually retreating to the bushes that bordered the plain. But suddenly he started back with a loud cry, for he discovered, under the trees, a large dog

sitting, while two horses, held by their bridles by a squire, were looking down at him. Wolf hastened towards them, and soon found that these horses and many more under the trees, with dogs and squires, were as stiff and stony as their masters.

In the closer examination of everything, which even Kuno was at last emboldened to make, they noticed at the foot of the table a couple of forms that especially attracted their attention. These were two rather elderly men, one of whom was looking searchingly towards the lake, with an expression of horror upon his earnest features. One hand he held to his ear as though more clearly to distinguish some sound, and with the other he touched the shoulder of the man next to him to excite his attention. The latter, however, did not heed him, but sat leaning back in his chair, emptying, apparently with much satisfaction, a huge can which he held to his lips.

Wolf and Kuno looked long at these two figures, and exhausted themselves in guessing what could so have excited the attention of one of these old lords. Kuno looked over his shoulder in the same direction in which the old lord was gazing, hoping to see something that might have attracted his gaze. But he could see nothing except the black mirror of the lake. In the mean time Wolf was observing the other lord closely, and lamenting that he should have been disturbed just in the midst of his drinking. He made many ridiculous speeches about him, and maintained that he must have been the thirstiest of the party.

And now the fear which had at first overpowered the boys vanished entirely, and, as they could not deter-

mine whether these figures had been chiselled out of stone by some great sculptor, or changed thus by magic art, they troubled themselves no longer about it, but were entertained for awhile with an examination of the strange weapons, drinking-cups, dresses, and, at last, even the horses and dogs. Wolf grew very courageous, and mounted upon a war-horse, and, when Kuno saw how brave and grand he looked, he mounted another, and they both shouted for joy. After they had urged their horses to step out, by shouting and spurring them with their heels (great would have been their terror had they budged an inch), they got down, and went on with their examination. They seated themselves in the two empty chairs at the head of the table, but soon left them, for the face of the old man with the crown looked down upon them with too reverend an air for any levity on their part. Then they wandered again around the table, and Wolf, standing before the lord who was drinking, laughingly proposed that they should pour some water into his goblet, that he might quench his thirst. Kuno thought this a most excellent idea, and, running down to the lake with his tankard, filled it with water. Then Wolf took it, and, standing upon tiptoe, poured it into the goblet, so that, in the position in which the knight held his can, the water touched his lips. In delight at the success of their attempt, the boys laughed loudly. But suddenly Wolf's merriment ceased, and he stared wildly at the knight's countenance, and the laughter died away upon Kuno's lips, and, with a loud shriek, he threw himself into Wolf's arms.

Who shall describe their fright when they saw the

lips in the cold stone face open and greedily drink the water which Wolf had poured into the goblet, while the eyes, before so lifeless, grew bright and beaming and animated by a strange expression! As the water flowed down his throat, the breast of the stone figure began to heave, and life trembled in every limb of the body. The old knight drew a couple of deep sighs, with a sobbing sound, and placed the goblet slowly upon the table. Then he turned his head and looked with astonishment at his neighbour, whose cold hand of stone, resting upon his shoulder, he felt and pressed, with every sign of wonder.

The two boys, in their amazement, dropped upon their knees, and looked up into the knight's countenance with pale faces and clasped hands, which, with the dumb movement of their lips, implored forgiveness for their insolent act, although fear deprived them of utterance. The newly-revived knight, after he had looked round upon the whole company with the same wonder with which he had regarded his next neighbour, noticed the two kneeling children, and started up from his chair, with a loud cry of wonder. Wolf, who now saw that they had really done no very great harm in converting a block of stone into a fine, living man, collected himself, and told the knight, in a few words, who they were, and what they had been doing, up to the moment when they had quite accidentally recalled him to life. The knight stared at them with astonishment, and listened to their story with the same wonder with which he inspired them. When they mentioned the tankard, he approached them, and when Kuno showed it and handed it to him, the old knight

uttered a loud exclamation of delight, and, snatching first the boys and then the tankard to his breast, he cried out, while the tears ran down his gray beard, "Now all our woes will end!"

Unwilling as Kuno was to part with his tankard, he gave it at once to the knight, who hung it upon his arm, and, as the evening was drawing on, told the boys to follow him. They all three went down to the place on the shore of the island where the boat was lying, descended the steps and seated themselves in the skiff, which instantly turned around and, without the help of rudder or sail, glided quickly in the direction whence the boys had come in the morning. They soon reached the other shore, got out, and led the knight to the spot where they could plainly see the castle beneath the waters of the lake. There they sat down, and the old knight looked into the water for a long time, and beckoned joyfully down into the depths. "Yes," cried he, aloud, "you poor wretches below there will soon be released,—the old castle will ascend from this black water and reign over the valley around, as of old." Wolf and Kuno, who listened attentively to the knight's words, were very curious to know what connection he had with the castle below, and Wolf took courage, and asked him.

The knight looked thoughtfully into the lake for awhile longer, as though he were searching for something there, and then, turning to the boys, told them the history of the castle, in the following words:

"The valley, in which we are, belonged, some time ago, to King Dagobert, whom you saw sitting at the table upon the island yonder, with his crown upon his

head. He lived contented and happy in his castle, which was not then, as now, at the bottom of this lake, but was beautifully situated in this valley, among the surrounding mountains, in the midst of beautiful gardens and fruitful fields. The king was contented and happy indeed, for he possessed everything to make life pleasant. Unfortunately, his wife died, but before her death she bore him two daughters, by whose cradles there luckily stood two of those powerful beings called Fairies. They took the place of a mother to the little princesses, and nurtured them so carefully that they grew up, the perfection of health and rare beauty. Instead of the gold, silver, and jewels with which, as godmothers, they might have presented them, they endowed one of the fountains in the court-yard of the castle with wonderful virtue, and made its waters so efficacious that it cured all sickness of every description, and even defied the power of old age, for, although the bloom of youth did not return to the aged who quaffed it, they were enabled to live in perfect health for many years longer. They also bestowed upon their favourites a copper tankard—the same which I have just obtained again through your assistance—to hold this healing water. When the two princesses were tolerably well grown, these powerful protectors were obliged, at their queen's command, to leave the valley, and did not conceal from the king that the care and attention which they had bestowed upon his daughters had attracted the notice of a mighty but evil spirit, who made it his business to interfere with and frustrate all their good intentions, and who would not fail to work any ill that he could in this case. As everything

under ground was subject to his will, the water which flows out of the earth was within his dominion, even the water of the healing fountain. In order to make of no avail this power, which worked mischief wherever it could, the fairies begged the king to hold the unpretending copper tankard in high honour, and never to allow water to be brought from the fountain in any other vessel, for thus only could the power of the subterranean spirit be restrained and be hindered from poisoning the water with evil properties, or causing it to overflow so as to overwhelm all that the valley contained.

“The king promised faithfully to follow their directions, and the fairies departed, calling down all manner of blessings upon the heads of their young charges. Then the king had the fountain surrounded in the costliest manner by carved marble, and roofed in with rosewood, and this gorgeous building had only one little door, for which the king had a most cunning lock contrived, the key of which he carried in his own girdle, never allowing any one else to have it for a moment. As he was not in the least selfish, and never grudged to any one the use of the healing water, at certain hours old and young, rich and poor, assembled in the court-yard of the castle, and King Dagobert himself unlocked the fountain and took good care that no other vessel except the copper tankard was used to draw the water. In a short time the water had done so much good that it excited, of course, the envy of the evil spirit, who had tried in many ways to steal the tankard, or to ruin the lock with which the king guarded his treasure. Several times the monarch found,

in the place where the tankard was kept, two tankards so precisely alike that he would have had great difficulty in distinguishing the real from the false one, if the fairies had not inspired the two princesses with a never-failing power of detecting at a glance what was false and wrong. And sometimes ambassadors or even princes came from strange courts to taste of the wonderful water of which they had heard so much, and would entreat King Dagobert to allow them to draw it in their own vessels. But the king remembered well the caution which the fairies had given him, and knew that the evil spirit would use every means in his power to turn the gift to harm."

At these words the knight stopped speaking for a moment, looked, sighing, down into the black lake, and then continued, "But ah! careful and determined as the king was to guard his precious possession, he was overreached at last. There came a day when King Dagobert commanded the noonday tables to be spread upon that island where you found me, which was then only a lovely green hillock, rising gently from the valley. It was a glorious day, and, after the king, the two princesses, and we—his train—had taken a ride over the neighbouring mountains, we dismounted upon that hill, where the tables stood ready. The squires, with the horses and dogs, withdrew into the bushes, and we seated ourselves at table amid heaping dainties and flowing wine-cups. At the head sat the king, with the two princesses on either side of him, while behind his chair were several foot-pages to fulfil his commands. The tankard, which he took with him upon all his pleasure-excursions, stood upon the table before him.

“Thus we sat, and the air was so pure and bracing, the day was so beautiful, that care and sad thoughts vanished from every breast, and all were cheerful and merry. Then I noticed that a ragged beggar, who had walked around the hill several times, ascended the elevation and approached King Dagobert. When he reached the table, he dropped upon his knees and entreated the king in the most humble and moving manner to give him a draught of the wondrous water. The king, unwilling to rise from the table, requested him to come to the castle at the end of an hour. But the beggar insisted that it was only at this moment that the water could do him any good, as his pains were just now more severe than ever. When the princesses saw that the king was loth to leave his wine-cup, they turned to him and begged him to trust them with the tankard and the key, and they would go alone with the beggar down to the castle, and get him a drink of the water. The two young maidens were weary of sitting still, and begged their father so earnestly that at last he gave them the tankard and the key. He warned them to be very cautious, and they ran down the hill towards the castle. The beggar followed. Not one suspicious thought occurred to any one of us sitting around. The castle was quite near, and we could follow the princesses with our eyes. They went to the fountain, opened the door, drew the water in the tankard, and then seemed to ask the beggar whether he had no vessel in which to receive his draught. He shook his head, and, as just at this moment I put my goblet to my lips, I cannot tell whether the two princesses put it themselves to his mouth, or whether he snatched it from them. I

only saw him waving the tankard in the air with a shout of triumph, and, as he instantly sank into the ground, we knew that the evil spirit had overreached us. I tried to rise from my seat, but I could not. I could not even take the goblet from my mouth, but felt as though it had grown fast to my lips. I wondered that some of the other knights did not spring up and rush to the assistance of the two princesses, who were vainly trying to close the door of the fountain against the flood of water that was welling from it. But all who were sitting at the table seemed to be spell-bound like myself. No sound escaped their lips, and even the barking of the dogs, who had been playing in the thicket, ceased with a troubled whine, and everything around us was still. A thick mist arose before my eyes, but, although I could see the fountain and the court-yard only indistinctly through it, I could perceive fresh and mighty floods of water were bursting forth. The princesses screamed for help, but no one went to their aid. Already the water had flooded the whole court-yard, and was slowly ascending the walls and turrets. Soon nothing more was to be seen of the unhappy princesses. The water was half-way up the great tower,—then it reached the roof, and then only the peak was visible. The next moment this vanished also, and only an ever-widening circle on the surface of the water still showed for a few moments where a stately castle had once stood.

“And we, meanwhile, were paralyzed not only with fear, but by the magic of the enchanter. Not only could we stir no limb for the moment, but the blood in our veins seemed to turn to stone,—the life within us

grew cold. Each one remained in the same position, and even with the same expression in his face and figure, as at the fatal moment when the sorcerer waved the tankard triumphantly in the air. Our eyes grew dim, and all was night before us. And thus we sat, day after day, night after night, for weeks and months, until hundreds of years have passed away."

This was the knight's story, to which the boys eagerly listened. Darkness had now set in, and they took their friend to the little house, and told him about the two snakes who had the evening before been turned into two lovely young girls. Wolf spoke of the crowns that they wore, and the knight soon recognized from his description the two young princesses, and saw that they must still be under the protection of the good fairies, who had probably placed this little cottage here, where the two sisters could pass every third night together in their natural shapes.

The two boys lay down upon the silken beds, and their companion upon the floor, and thus all three slept until the golden morning dawned. Then they awoke joyfully, and the knight began to consider earnestly how he could bring about the disenchantment of the castle. Although the day before, this had seemed an easy task, upon a closer view the matter presented many difficulties. He was in possession of the magic vessel that could restrain the power of the evil spirit, but he could not find out how he was to make use of it. He knew of no magic word or spell whereby he could bind and rule the black water. The good knight was, in truth, in no small perplexity. He went to the shore of the lake with the two boys,

and was about to sail over to the island and attempt to revive all who were sitting around the table, when suddenly it occurred to the brave and faithful courtier, how much better it would be if, when his master should recover his consciousness, he could see his castle and valley as lovely as ever before him, freed from all evil spells! And, although the knight knew of no magic word to effect all this, it was his duty, he thought, to venture all for his lord and master, be the end what it might. Occupied with these thoughts, the knight seated himself with the two boys in the little boat, which immediately began its voyage across the lake. When they had reached the middle of the black water, the knight suddenly arose, and said, "My dear children, sit still, and let me make one attempt, whether it succeeds or not, to deliver this valley from the spell now resting upon it. I will try, with the help of this tankard, to close and lock the door of the fountain, that the water may no longer gush forth."

The boys hardly understood what these words meant, but uttered a loud scream of terror when they saw their friend spring into the black lake and immediately vanish. Kuno clasped his hands despairingly, more in sorrow for his tankard than for the knight, and Wolf could not help suspecting that this might be another bad spirit, who had thus robbed them of their treasure. But, whilst they sat there and Kuno wept aloud, they heard beneath them the noise as of a door shutting violently, and a few moments afterwards the astonished boys noticed a remarkable change in the lake around them. It began to be troubled and to foam up, and then they perceived that the waters were diminishing.

Black clouds overspread the heavens, and these clouds lowered over the lake, and seemed to drink up the water from it. Each moment these clouds grew darker with the black water that they absorbed, and, when they were quite full, they moved away above the mountain-tops and gave place to other thirsty clouds. Thus the water in the lake sank more and more rapidly. Soon, right by the rocking skiff, the spire of a tower appeared above the water, and then the whole roof of the tower followed. Upon this spire, and under the overhanging roof, the boys noticed, with surprise, crows, swallows, and other birds, who were sleeping, apparently, with their heads under their wings. But no sooner were they above water than they all woke up. The ravens and crows flew high into the air to see what was the matter, and the swallows skimmed above the water to procure gnats and other insects for food, as they had been a long time without any. Soon other walls appeared on each side of the boys,—smaller towers, with buttresses, behind which stood men-at-arms leaning on their spears and seeming to be asleep. But no sooner did the fresh air play around them in place of the stagnant black water of the lake, than they stretched and stamped, and, yawning loudly, gazed inquiringly about them.

And now the roof of the castle itself appeared above the surface of the lake, and, if the boys had been surprised at the awakening of the birds and the squires upon the towers, their admiration and wonder reached the highest pitch when they saw how men and animals swarmed about every story as the waters sank. Here,

a couple of stable-boys were seen measuring out provender in the granary, while below maids were opening all the windows and doors to let fresh air into the king's apartments. But in the kitchen the bustle was the greatest and most manifold, for just when the spell was laid upon them, three hundred years before, the head-cook had been preparing the dessert for the king's table, and was disturbed in the midst of this weighty affair. The scullions were running about, arranging dishes full of pastry, confectionery, rare fruits, and other costly refreshments, while other attendants in gold-bordered doublets took these dishes to carry them up the hill.

The skiff, with the boys, sank deeper and deeper, till the castle stood before them just as grand and stately as the knight had described it, and they found themselves at last floating upon what was only a little pond. The skiff was near the shore, and the boys sprang out into the lovely garden. They ran around the castle quickly to find the old knight, and, when they entered the court-yard, saw him standing by the fountain, on the brink of which was the tankard. But the two princesses whom they had seen in the little house were in his arms, and all three were weeping for joy. The boys, too shy to approach them, paused a few steps off, and were so moved with all that they had seen that the tears were rolling down their cheeks also. Suddenly a great uproar arose upon the hill, which a little while before had been an island above the surface of the black lake. Hunting-horns sounded, horses neighed, and dogs bayed. All there awoke to life, and

King Dagobert arose at the head of his table and called loudly to his children. In the castle court-yard they all dismounted from their horses, and there was no end to the delight and joy. Then the old knight told how it was the two boys who had delivered the valley from the spell under which it had lain, and presented them to the king, who inquired about their previous history, and, as the famous race of Schreckenberg was well known to him, he received with favour the last scion of that race, and Wolf, too, whose riper years and courage had assisted not a little in the deliverance of the spell-bound valley.

And the old joyous life began again in the king's castle, disturbed by no more evil spirits. When Kuno and Wolf, after a few years, had been instructed in all knightly exercises, and had wandered through the land, killing giants and defending innocent women and children, they came one day to the site of the castle of Schreckenberg, and there in a miserable hovel they found an old man who had fought and fallen, but not died, with Fritz of Schreckenberg. As he knew of the immense buried treasure, he had carefully preserved it, and now handed it over to the heir, who took it with him to the court of King Dagobert. In the course of time the noble knights Kuno and Wolf (for the latter received knighthood from King Dagobert himself) won the love of the two princesses, so that their royal father could not refuse his consent to this double marriage.

The old man told how his master, Fritz of Schreckenberg, had brought home the tankard from one of

his marauding excursions. But, as it presented so mean an appearance, it was thrown aside in the lumber-room and forgotten.

King Dagobert recognized, in the dream which had made such an impression upon the dying countess, the influence of the beneficent fairy, who had ordered all events for good.

THE END.



